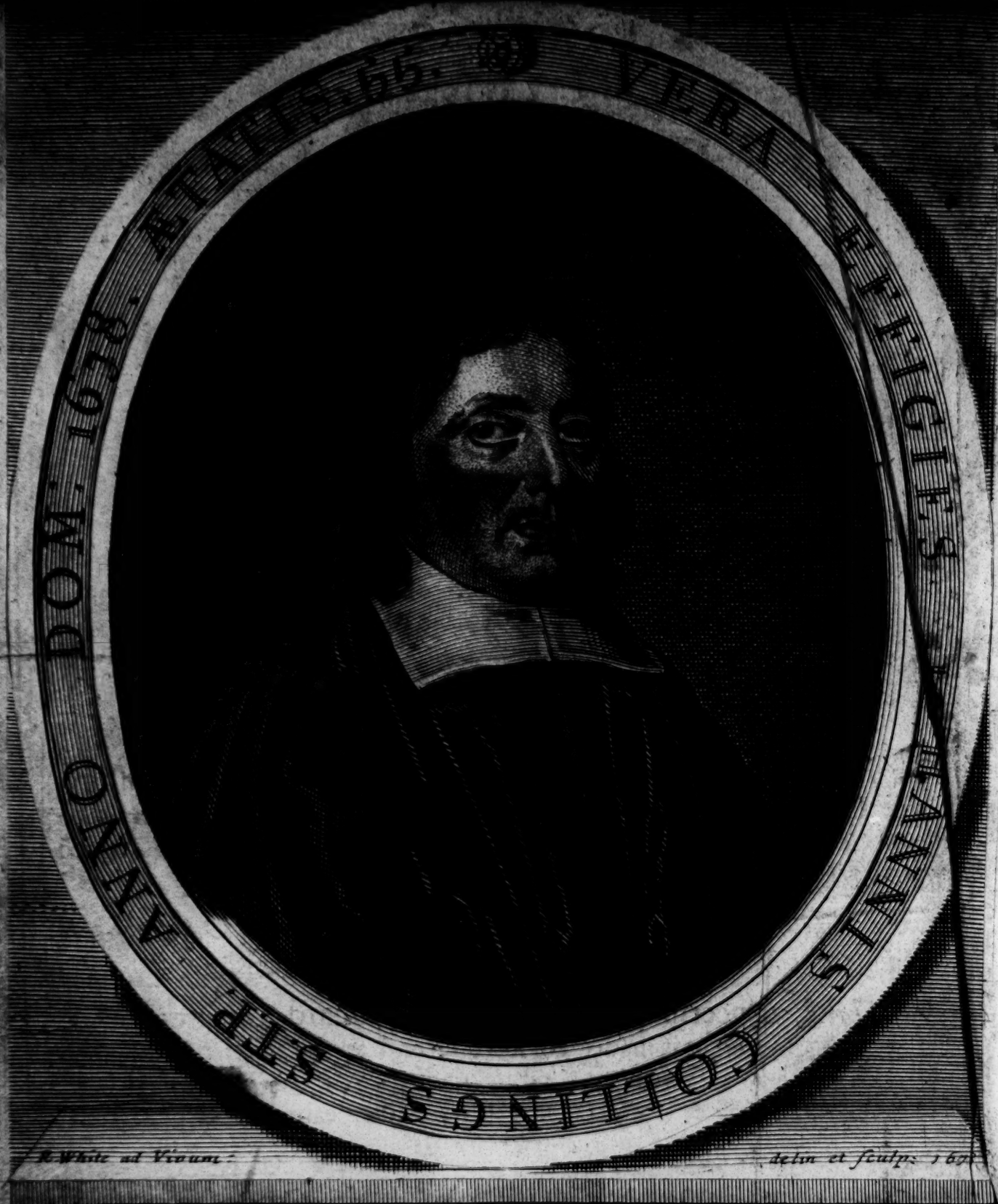

Man's but a shadow, and a Picture is
That shadow's shadow. yet don't judge amiss.
Though here you onely on the shadow look
What followes read. The Substance is i'th' book.

SEVERAL DISCOURSES Concerning the Actual Providence OF GOD.

DIVIDED INTO

THREE PARTS.

The *First*, Treating concerning the Notion of it, eſtabliſhing the Doctrine of it, opening the principal ACTS of it, *Preſervation* and *Government* of created Beings. With the particular *Acts*, by which it ſo *preſerveth* and *governeth* them.

The *Second*, Concerning the *Specialties* of it, the *Unſearchable* things of it, and ſeveral *Obſervable* things in its motions.

The *Third*, concerning the Δυσνόητα, or hard Chapters of it, in which an attempt is made, to ſolve ſeveral appearances of difficulty in the motions of *Providence*, and to vindicate the *Juſtice*, *Wiſdom*, and *Holineſs of God*, with the reaſonableneſs of his dealing in ſuch Motions.

By JOHN COLLINGES, D.D.

LONDON:

Printed for *Tho. Parkhurſt*, and are to be ſold by *Edward Giles* Bookſeller in St. *Andrews Pariſh* in *Norwich*, 1678.

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To the Right Honourable the Lady *Frances Thompſon.*

MADAM,

I Beſeech your *Honour* to believe me telling you, that I have been theſe thirteen years (ever ſince I had the happineſs to know your Ladiſhip) watching an opportunity, as to let your Ladiſhip know the ſenſe I have of the obligations you have been pleaſed to lay upon me; ſo to let the world know the *honour* I have for your *Ladiſhip*, growing up from my firſt *obſervations* of you, which was in your *Ladiſhips* near *approaches* to, and in your ſtate of *Widowhood*. I then obſerved, *Madam*, that your *Ladiſhip* (like the child of ſo *Honourable* and pious Parents) had very early entertained *juſt*, *noble*, and moſt *honourable thoughts of the living God*, which had produced in you as early a *choice of him as your God*, and of *his ways*, as *your ways*, with a *zeal* beyond the proportion which could be expected from your years. Having therefore perfected the following Diſcourſes, I congratulated my ſelf, when I had thought of your *Ladiſhip* as a fit perſon to entitle to them, and the rather, becauſe your Ladiſhip (having not yet ſeen many years) ſhall I hope have many days to obſerve the motions of *Divine Providence*, both as to *Polities* and *Perſons*; and from thence both to conclude, how true thoſe few *Obſervations* are which I have made, and to give ſome more eminent Divine, many a ſubject more of this nature from your own *obſervation*. *Madam!* in the few years you have yet lived, you have ſeen as many, and as quick, and inexpected *rotations of Providence*; as

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the like number of years have at any time as yet produced, or are like to produce; and yet the wheel seems to run nimbly, and a further multitude of years may add to your *Ladiships wisdom* in this thing. I crave leave most humbly to recommend to your *Honour*, as the observation of *Issues*, so the confirmation of *Divine Promises*, and *Threatnings* in the *fulfilling* of them. I doubt not but your *Ladiship* will every day see, that it is *that God who cannot lye*, who hath commanded his Ministers at all times to *say unto the righteous, it shall be well with them, for they shall eat of the fruit of their doings*; and to say, *Wo unto the wicked it shall be ill with them, for the reward of their hands shall be given them.* If *Madam!* the *actual Providence of God* at any time seemeth to look another way, it is but keeping your patient foot a while at the *Promise*, and *Providence* (like the *Bee*) will come home to the *word* of *Promise* or *Threatning*, bringing along with it a body *laden with honey*, to reward the godly and righteous man, and a sting to *smite* and pierce those through who have wrought wickedness, and provoked a jealous God. Our blessed Lord (*Madam*) tells us, *Joh.* 17. 3. *That it is life eternal for men to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.* The promise or predication in the proposition of that Text, makes it evident that by the *knowledg of the Father*, and *Jesus Christ*, is meant more than the bare comprehension of the *nature* and *things of God* in our *understanding* (as indeed knowledg and most other terms of sense do ordinarily signifie in Scripture, the *Greek* complying with its elder sister the *Hebrew*, which hath a great penury of words) so that to *know God* and Christ in the true sense of that *text*, is not only in our understandings to comprehend what may be, and is necessary to be known of God; but to

adore,

adore, love, fear him, *believe in him,* to chuſe him for our God. In ſhort it comprehends all thoſe acts of our minds which are either juſt conſequents, or may rationally be inferred as duties from a juſt underſtanding and due comprehenſion of him; but in regard according to the workings of our reaſonable natures thoſe acts will not, indeed cannot be exerted, without a prævious apprehenſion of him proportionable to what he indeed is, and ſo as to make him an adequate object for our *affections*, a juſt comprehenſion of God in our underſtandings is neceſſary, in order to thoſe other acts of internal homage, wherein the Creature ſtandeth indebted to his great Creator. So that *Solomon*, Prov. 19. 2. did but conclude rationally, *That the ſoul ſhould be without knowledg is not good.* And the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles askt but a reaſonable queſtion, *Rom.* 10. *How ſhall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?*

All Knowledg comes into the Soul either by the *Exterior ſenſes*, or by *reaſoning* and diſcourſe; or thirdly by *Divine impreſſion and revelation.* The two former are the more ordinary; the latter, a rarer and more extraordinary means of knowledg, in theſe latter days, ſince God hath *ſpoken to us by his Son.*

I ſpeak of Knowledg ſtrictly taken for the comprehenſion of things in our underſtanding, for if we take it in the large ſenſe even now mentioned, neither ſenſe, nor reaſon, is a ſufficient mean to it.

By *ſenſe* we can directly comprehend nothing of God, for who hath ſeen him at any time? he is an Incorporeal, immaterial ſubſtance, and cometh not under the cogniſance of any ſenſe, nor indeed can we ſo know any ſpiritual being; but in regard the effects both of him who is the *Father of Spirits*, and of *ſpiritual beings* that

that are creatures are ſenſible. Our Senſes afford us oft-times an auxiliary help, from which our reaſon draweth juſt concluſions concerning God, from Principles which it at firſt it eſtabliſheth by the help of *ſenſe*. For example, That the *World* is, and *Man* is, are matters of ſenſe. Now Reaſon concludes, *Nothing* (unleſs a firſt being) *can be the cauſe of its own exiſtence.* Hence it gathers there muſt be a *God*, a *firſt being*, and a *firſt cauſe*. Again, when Senſe hath ſhewed us *Man* a *reaſonable creature*, Reaſon works and tells us, *He that made this noble Creature muſt needs be more noble, more reaſonable, more excellent.*

What we know then of God muſt needs be from *Reaſon* or *Revelation*. Reaſon brings us in knowledg, by raiſing *Concluſions* from *Principles*. Theſe Principles are of two ſorts, *Philoſophical*, or *Scriptural*. I call thoſe *Philoſophical Principles*, which reaſon as it now reſideth in us juſtifieth, and which without the *help of the Word of God* are allowed by all; or the moſt of men, eſpecially if cultivated by any ingenuous education, being either *common natural principles*, or ſuch as are eſtabliſhed by ſtudies upon deliberate thoughts, with the help of ſenſe, and improvement of diſcourſe and ratiocination. Thus Reaſon will tell us that there is a *God*, but *one God*; That *he muſt be* the firſt *being*, the *firſt cauſe*, more excellent in the perfections of his being than any creature; and an hundred things of a like evidence. Or elſe it concludeth from *revealed Principles*, (having firſt a ſufficient evidence, *That the holy Scriptures are the word of God, who cannot ſpeak falſly.*) Theſe Principles now are ſuch propoſitions as without the ſurer word of Propheſie we could never have had any juſt evidence of: Such now are the Doctrines of the *Trinity*, The *Incarnation of Chriſt*, The *Perſonal union*

of

of the Divine and Humane Nature in him; and many others.

In the diſcovery and juſtification of ſuch Concluſions as Reaſon gathereth from the firſt ſort of Principles, lyeth the work of a *Philoſopher* as a Philoſopher. In the diſcovery and proof of ſuch Propoſitions as are partly evidenced from Reaſon, but more fully from Scripture, lies the work of a *Chriſtian Philoſopher*.

In the diſcovery, proving and applying of ſuch Propoſitions as have their Evidence partly from Reaſon, and more fully from *holy Writ*, or as cannot be at all concluded, unleſs building upon Scriptural foundations, but are founded in Scripture, and may be illuſtrated imperfectly from reaſon, and ſhewed not to be improbable nor unreaſonable, lyes the work of the Miniſter of the Goſpel, who is to convey the knowledg of God to his people. And the true reaſon why ſome even of theſe ſilver Trumpets (which belong to the Sanctuary) give an *incertain ſound*, is becauſe neither the Principles of *natural Reaſon*, nor *Revelation*, appear to all men in the ſame *light*. We ſay, *The beſt Philoſopher is not as yet born*. Our age tells us how generally Principles of Philoſophy are exploded (and it may be ſome of them juſtly too) which we when we were boys thought to lye very near *Demonſtration*; and doubtleſs in the next age ſomething now admitted, will be judged as faulty. It hath pleaſed God to ſubject our underſtandings to this vanity. Now we having no way (unleſs God would from Heaven ſpeak to us) to know any propoſition of Truth, but from the exerciſe of our Reaſon concluding, either from Principles purely natural, or from Propoſitions of *Revelation* in *Scripture*, every one naturally judging himſelf obliged to believe, according to the evidence he hath from his underſtanding,

ding, there must and will be different apprehensions until (which will never be) men have all either the same degrees of *Natural Reason*, or *Scriptural knowledg*; which will be advantaged if there be any who think that all Propositions are to be weighed by the *ballance* of *Natural Reason*, and that the holy Scripture as to the sense of it must come into that *scale*, and make but in-weight giving only an auxiliary help to the Evidence of the most *sublime Propositions* of truth. Nor is there any help for this. The Church of *Rome* (which your Ladiship knows pretends to wondrous Miracles) hath indeed devised a *palliating* cure for this, setting up an *Infallible cheat* to judg of *all Controversies*, and by *fire and faggots*, and all barbarous *cruelties*, and *inhumanities* forcing men to acquiesce in the *Decisions* of that *ridiculous Judg*. But in the mean time mens Consciences apprehend themselves before one who is no *Judg* in the case, and the sore festreth and rotteth to the bone; for the *Pope* can make none to alter his mind. And a little reason might tell the *Quacks* of that Colledg, that if it be not in the power of a man to *believe what he hath a mind to believe*, it is much less in the power of a foreign power to compell him to it.

The *Protestant* cure is certainly more *humane* and *reasonable*, yea and more *Apostolical* too. They set forth *sums of sound Doctrine*, to which they only annex that of the Apostle, *Phil.* 3. 15. *Let us therefore (as many as be perfect) be thus minded, and if any in any thing be otherwise minded God shall reveal even this unto you.* Only *Protestants* require (as the same Apostle directs) *Rom.* 14. That if any hath a *particular faith*, (different from that of the Church wherein he liveth) *he should have it to himself before God.* Thus the *Knowledg of God* is acquired from his word, reading it, being

ing Catechised out of it, hearing it opened, and preached, by the *comparing of spiritual things with spiritual*; by the use of reason and discourse in the *Velitation of Questions* arising from the seeming contradictions in Holy Writ, *&c.*

But there is also another mean of *Divine Knowledg*, that is by his *exterior works*, by which much of the Knowledg of God is *gained*, *improved*, and *encreased*. These works are either of *Creation*, or of *Providence*. Creation was the work of the first six days, from which God hath ceased long since, but the things created remain, and much of the Knowledg of God is to be gained from thence, by the help of *sense*, which sheweth us the things, and *reason* which helpeth us to conclude, that there being so many noble effects, there must be a *first* and more noble cause; there being so many excellent Beings, there must be a *first* and most perfect and *excellent Being*. Nothing created could give an Existence to it self: Hence the Apostle telleth us, *That the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen from the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead*, Rom. 1. 20. *So that they are without excuse, because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God.*

For the *Book of Scriptures* we (blessed be God!) have it in our Vernacular Tongue, we have means to teach us to read, we have *Catechisms*, and *Confessions of Faith*, containing the *Epitome* and *substance* of them, we have the various labours of holy and learned men, to make us to understand them; scarce any thing seemeth to be wanting to this age for the gaining of this *excellent knowledg* by this mean but persons giving themselves up to *Reading*, *Hearing*, *Meditation*, *Christian Conferences*, and *Prayer*.

For the *Book of Creation* methinks it is like a great *Bible* in ſome *Religious Gentlemans* Hall, that lyes always open; we cannot move a ſtep in the world, nor lift up an eye to Heaven, but our eye is upon one page, or another of it. If men will not read the *Wiſdom of God*, in the ſagacity and wiſdom of ſome Creatures, nor the power and greatneſs of God in the *greatneſs and power* of others, and ſo for other perfections; it is not becauſe they want means, but becauſe they want an heart to ſeek after God: as to this there is no want of any thing, but a wiſe contemplation of them, and a rational concluding from the perfections of the effects to the greater excellency and perfection of the firſt *cauſe* and *being*. The Book of Creation will learn us much of the nature and admirable perfections of the Divine Being. The Book of Scripture will learn us more of it, and inſtruct us in ſublimer Myſteries than Reaſon could diſcover: *The Doctrine of the Trinity*; the *two Natures united in the Perſon of the Mediator*. They will tell us of Gods Covenants, of Chriſts performances of the *Covenant of Redemption*, of the *Will of God* to be done by us, and the Will of God to be done unto, and upon us, in his *Promiſes* and *threatnings*. The Apoſtle ſums up all, when he tells us *they are able to make the man of God wiſe to ſalvation, throughly furniſhed to every good work*.

But there is yet another Book which is leſs obvious to the *eye of ſenſe*, than the Book of Creation is, and to the eye of Reaſon too, and upon which fewer *Commentaries* have been wrote, than upon the *Books of holy Scripture*, that is the Book of *Actual Providence*. A Book in which much of God is written, and from which much of God may be learned; but it is commonly taken for the *Viſion of a book that is ſealed, which is*

given

given to one who is learned, with a command to *read it*, but he ſaith, *I cannot, for it is ſealed.* Some (more bruti∫h than the Heathens) deny any ſuch Book, dreaming of the old Pagan *Fate*, or *blind Fortune.*

Others will allow it in part, but will have much of it ſpurious, dreaming that the World is like a *Clock*, which once ſet in order and wound up, goes alone without further uſe of the Workmans hand. Others will allow Divine Providence a more univerſal influence, but yet love not to hear of any *Specialties* of it. Some again highly conceited of their own reaſon, will ſubject the Providence of God to their rational Concluſions. Few or none make any *obſervations* upon the motions of Divine Providence; though certainly nothing more conduceth to true Spiritual wiſdom. Others ſtumbling at ſome *difficulties* relating to the motions of Providence, either wholly deny it, or form to themſelves ſtrange *Ideas* of God, which no way agree to his moſt holy and perfect eſſence.

This *Madam!* hath encouraged me to attempt ſomething both to recover the *Actual Providence* of God, from the *Atheiſm* of this age, and the groundleſs prejudices which vain men have taken up againſt it; and by it to recover for God, that juſt *Fear*, *Faith*, *Love*, *Patience*, and other homage, which both the excellency of his *being*, and of his holy working calleth for. And certainly, *Madam*, if learned men have thought it worth their while (as ſome have done) to give the World a rational account of *Divine Offices*, of the *Modes* and *circumſtances* of *Eccleſiaſtical conſtitutions* in Rites and Garments, Liturgies and Ceremonies, *&c.* It muſt needs be a *noble work*, to undertake to give the world a *Rational* of *Divine Operations.* Such eſpecially which ſeem to be the hardeſt Chapters in the

book of Providence, and least easie to be understood; and indeed this was my *original design*. But while my thoughts were exercised in this, my work grew upon my hand, considering especially the *Atheism* of the age in which we live, together with the circumstances of the Church and people of God in most *European* parts of the world, and the particular *temptations* I have observed attending many, and those very excellent persons. I was further drawn on by the *pleasantness and usefulness* of the subject in all, but especially in evil times, and the apparent tendency of it to make men fear, and love, hope and trust in, and with patience to wait upon God. These things, *Madam*, made me resolve to open the Doctrine of Providence more fully, though not in its full compass, and latitude (resolving always to carry along with me the capacity of those to whom I spake or wrote.) I was, *Madam*, the more encouraged in this from my observation, that amongst the many excellent Books with which this age doth abound, there are fewer of this Argument than any other. Mr. *Obadiah Sedgwick* (a great Divine) treats in two or three Sermons about the *Specialties of Providence*, and the late eminent Bishop *Wilkins* hath in a short Tract learnedly and piously discoursed the *symmetry* and *beauty* of it. Another in a larger Discourse called an *Introduction into the Doctrine of Providence*, hath made and a little enlarged upon *several Observations* upon the motions of it. I projected and have at last finished a fuller Discourse than any of these (though possibly much more imperfect so far as they did discourse this excellent argument) and resolved to divide my discourse into three parts, which accordingly I have done.

In the first Part, *Madam*, after two Preliminary Discourses; the first concerning Gods *Predeterminations*,

 (where

(where I had no mind to meddle with any present Controversies, that was not a popular work,) the second concerning *Creation*; Your Ldiship will find me plainly discoursing of the *Nature of Providence*, in the notion in which alone I intended to speak to it. There I have from Scripture and Reason proved, That there is a constant care of God extended to the whole *Creation:* That the Creature stands not in its own strength, nor moveth meerly from a principle within it self; nor is governed meerly by its fellow-creatures in a superior order, much less acteth *casually*, or under the *necessity* of any fate; but is under the daily *inspection*, *government*, *care* and *influence* of the *first cause*, its great Creator, who both *preserveth* and *governeth it*. There I have shortly shewed the particular acts by which God preserveth and governeth created Beings in their several capacities: A point, *Madam*, of inexpressible use, to possess us of a true notion of God, of our daily dependencies upon him, and (consequently) our duty toward him. *David* saith he was *fearfully and wonderfully made*; we are *fearfully and wonderfully preserved*.

In the second Part I have discoursed 1. Of the *Specialties of Providence*, more especially to the Church, and to every individual soul that loves and fears him, shortly opening wherein they lye, and shewing the reasonableness of it. 2. Then I more shortly discourse the *unsearchable things of it*; for *Madam*, who dare pretend more than to shew a *part of his ways? Who can by searching find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to Perfection?* This I have done to check *curiosity*, and keep off good people from vain guesses and Prophetical conclusions without bottom. 3. From that the discourse will lead your Ladiship to consider the duty of a good Christian, in the observatioa of the motions of

Providence, and the advantage from it resulting to an observing soul. To help my Reader in this I have made *several observations upon the motions of Providence.* Some of which lie plain enough to every eye, all I think are justified enough from Scriptural and other instances, only perhaps the reasonableness and justice, and wisdom of God in them, is not or hath not been so obvious. Others (possibly) have not been so remarked, and are little more than recommended as *probationers* for a good mans observation.

There is, *Madam*, a great variety in the methods of an infinitely wise God by which he ordereth the Universe, and particularly that people in the world which he hath set apart for himself, In the same work Gods Providence moveth not at all times in the same method, or by the same means, yet in many things the motions of Providence have much uniformity if we wistly observe them.

And as from the reading, and observation of the *Syntax* and *construction* used by Authors in several languages, Grammarians have made their observations, from whence they have formed *Rules*, few of which are yet without their exceptions: so from the observation of the motions of *Divine Providence* in the world; the reading of the Sacred History, and considering what the great God hath been doing, and is doing in the world; considerate Christians may gain a great knowledg of God in his ways, and give a very probable conjecture, if not form a certain judgment, both what God is about to do, and what *Israel ought to do. For* (saith the Wiseman, *Eccles.* 1.9,10.) *the thing which hath been it is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the Sun. Is there any thing of which it may be said, see this is new? it hath been already of old time which was before*

before us. The Sinners of the world are but acting over thoſe luſts of hatred to God, malice, revenge, cruelty, luxury, which their foreſathers periſhed in acting many years ago. And the Saints in the world are but making the ſame *defence*, fighting the *ſame good fight*, finiſhing the ſame courſe which *Abel* began in the Old Teſtament, and was carried on by *Elijah*, *Zachariah*, and all the Prophets, by *John Baptiſt*, and the *Captain of our Salvation*; and Gods motions of Providence will appear much the ſame: as to circumſtances of time and place, *&c.* they may alter, but ſubſtantially they muſt be ſo, becauſe of the certainty of the word both of *promiſe*, and *threatning*. The ſtudy of *Actual Providence* (for which the Hiſtorical part of the Scripture which we count moſt uſeleſs, is of great uſe) is a noble ſtudy, and the obſervation of the daily motions of it, is highly conducive to make us ſpiritually wiſe, and to help us to underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord, both towards his Church, and individual ſouls which love and fear him. I have, *Madam*, been ſomething large in theſe obſervations, but yet how little a portion of Gods ways have I here diſplayed? I ſhall yet think I have done a great work, if I have but ſet an example to ſome other Divines of greater parts, knowledg, judgment and obſervation, to carry it on, for doubtleſs, many more obſervations might be made, which would both much increaſe our knowledg, and direct our practice.

In the third and laſt part of my Diſcourſes, *Madam*, I have endeavoured to expound ſome difficult Chapters in the *book of Providence*, and to deliver the name of that glorious God, whom we ſerve, from thoſe prejudices, which nothing but the luſts of men have raiſed in the world againſt him, and his righteous ways. To reconcile

concile the ways of Divine Providence both to those *Propositions* of truth, which lye plain in the word, and to those Promises and Threatnings which are the Indications of his will in that word, both with reference to Saints and Sinners.

I think, *Madam*, I discern two great Errors in the world: 1. The Judgment of Truth. 2. Of the love and hatred of God from motions and issues of *Providence*. Hence because God in his Providence hath ordered the Production of Men and Women, giving them life and being, and his Gospel to be preached in their hearing; so as they are externally called to repent and to believe, men conclude, *There is no election of persons, That Christ hath died for all and every man*; That every *man hath a power to repent, believe, love God, hate sin, &c.* And I wish a modest denial of Divine Truths were the worst: but we are fallen into a *rude* and ill mannered age, when every puny hath boldness enough to say, If this be so, then *God is an impostor*, and mocks and deludes, he is *unjust, cruel*. I tremble to recite it; when-as the truth is, it is neither *so* nor *so*. Let what will be concluded concerning these Propositions, no such thing will follow. I have, *Madam*, endeavoured to reconcile these Providences of God to the truth of these Propositions, which some invidiously charge with such consequences, and to let these bold men understand that God is equal, his ways equal, and admirably corresponding with those notions of truth so much distast them; only they are ignorant, and do not rightly judg concerning a righteous God.

The second Error is more common: *The judging of the love and hatred of God from his Providential dispensations to us.* Hence are our *temptations* to call the

proud

proud happy, to bleſs them whom the Lord hath curſed, and becauſe they are rich and proſper; and as to our ſelves, to charge God fooliſhly, as if either he did not deal juſtly or kindly with us, becauſe we are tempted or afflicted more than others, or becauſe we are devoured by wicked men.

I have, *Madam*, attempted to remove theſe ſtumbling blocks out of the ways of Gods people, and to reconcile both theſe motions of Providence, and all its motions in the diſpenſations both of *firſt* and *further grace*, to his *Wiſdom*, *Goodneſs*, and *Holineſs*, and to our reaſon; as alſo to reconcile Gods Providential permiſſions of ſin, and ſinners, his puniſhment of one ſin with another, to the purity and *holineſs of God*; and to deliver Gods Providential diſpenſations of this nature from the uſual and ignorant imputation, that *this is to make God the author of ſin*; what I have done of this nature, I leave to your *Ladiſhip*, and every ſober *Reader* to judg. The whole, *Madam*, was compoſed for *popular diſcourſes*. Thoſe that dwell in Kings houſes may be allowed perhaps to cloth their Diſcourſes in the *ſoft raiment* of fine and delicate words. It was not ſo fit for me who was to ſpeak of great things to a plain people, and whoſe deſign was that of S. *Paul*, not to have the faith of thoſe to whom I ſpake, ſtand tottering upon the wiſdom of men (which varieth much in *individuals*) but *in the power of God*. I am far from thinking theſe Diſcourſes perfect in any part of them. I have laid the foundation, God raiſe up wiſe and maſter-builders to ſuperſtruct. If I miſtake not, the foundation I have laid, is not upon the *ſand*, and uncertain bottom of humane reaſon, but upon the *Apoſtles* and *Prophets*, *Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner ſtone*.

Madam, I moſt humbly beg pardon of your *Ladiſhip* and

noble Husband, for no further taking notice of him in this Epistle. I had not, when I wrote it, *knowledg* enough of him to entitle me to such a presumption; I now so far know him, as to let me know he will not be disgusted at what is offered to your *Ladiship*; and to assure me, he is one who owneth and adoreth *Divine Providence*; and if he had no other *motives*, I pretty well am assured also that its *dispensation* towards himself in disposing such a *Lady* to his bosom, and making him such a *Father in our Israel*, by your *Ladiship*, as he is, and I trust shall further be, would be sufficient. I most humbly beg, *Madam*, all the *Blessings of Heaven and Earth* upon him, and upon your *Ladiship*, and all those whom God hath given you, and crave the honour to subscribe my self,

Your Honours most humble Servant,

May 1. 1678.

JOHN COLLINGES.

Mr. GEORGE HERBERT
ON
Providence.

O Sacred Providence, who from end to end
Strongly and ſweetly moveſt! ſhall I write,
And not of thee, through whom my fingers bend
To hold my quill? ſhall they not do thee right?

Of all the creatures both in ſea and land,
Only to man thou haſt made known thy ways,
And put the pen alone into his hand,
And made him Secretary of thy praiſe.

Beaſts fain would ſing; Birds ditty to their notes;
Trees would be tuning on their native Lute
To thy renown: but all their hands and throats
Are brought to Man, while they are lame and mute.

Man is the Worlds High-Prieſt: he doth preſent
The Sacrifice for all; while they below
Unto the Service mutter an aſſent,
Such as Springs uſe that fall, and Winds that blow.

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Such as Springs uſe that fall, and Winds that blow.

He that to praiſe and laud thee doth refrain,
Doth not refrain unto himſelf alone,
But robs a thouſand who would praiſe thee fain;
And doth commit a world of ſin in one.

The Beaſts ſay, Eat me: but, if beaſts muſt teach,
The Tongue is yours to eat, but mine to praiſe.
The Trees ſay, Pull me: but the hand you ſtretch,
Is mine to write, as it is yours to raiſe.

Wherefore, moſt Sacred Spirit, I here preſent
For me and all my fellows, praiſe to thee:
And juſt it is that I ſhould pay the rent,
Becauſe the benefit accrues to me.

We all acknowledg both thy power and love
To be exact, tranſcendent, and divine;
Who doſt ſo ſtrongly and ſo ſweetly move,
While all things have their will, yet none but thine.

For either thy Command, *or thy* Permiſſion
Lay hands on all: they are thy right *and* left,
The firſt puts on with ſpeed and expedition;
The other curbs ſins ſtealing pace and theft.

Nothing eſcapes them both: all muſt appear,
And be diſpos'd and dreſs'd, and tun'd by thee,
Who ſweetly temper'ſt all. If we could hear
Thy skill and art, what muſick would it be!

Thou art in ſmall things great, not ſmall in any:
Thy even praiſe can neither riſe nor fall.
Thou art in all things one, in each thing many:
For thou art infinite in one, and all.

Tem-

Tempeſts are calm to thee, they know thy hand,
And hold it faſt, as children do their fathers,
Which cry and follow, Thou haſt made poor ſand
Check the proud ſea, ev'n when it ſwells and gathers.

Thy Cupboard ſerves the World: the meat is ſet,
Where all may reach: no beaſt but knows his feed:
Birds teach us hawking: fiſhes have their net:
The great prey on the leſs, they on ſome weed.

Nothing ingendred doth prevent his meat;
Flies have their table ſpread, e're they appear.
Some creatures have in winter what to eat;
Others do ſleep, and envy not their chear.

How finely doſt thou times and ſeaſons ſpin!
And make a twiſt checker'd with night and day!
Which as it lengthens, winds, and winds us in,
As bowls go on, but turning all the way.

Each creature hath a wiſdom for his good.
The pigeons feed their tender off-ſpring, crying,
When they are callow; but withdraw their food
When they are fledg, that need may teach them flying.

Bees work for man; and yet they never bruiſe
Their Maſters flow'r, but leave it, having done,
As fair as ever, and as fit to uſe:
So both the flow'r doth ſtay, and honey run.

Sheep eat the graſs, and dung the ground for more.
Trees after bearing drop their leaves for ſoil:
Springs vent their ſtreams, and by expence get ſtore:
Clouds cool by heat, and Baths by cooling boil.

Who hath the vertue to expreſs the rare
And curious vertues both of Herbs and Stones?
Is there an Herb for that? O that thy care
Would ſhew a root that gives expreſſions!

And if an Herb hath power, what have the Stars!
A Roſe, beſides his beauty, is a cure.
Doubtleſs our Plagues and Plenty, Peace and Wars
Are there much ſurer than our Art is ſure.

Thou haſt hid Metals: man may take them thence;
But at his peril: when he digs the place,
He makes a grave; as if the thing had ſenſe,
And threatned man, that he ſhould fill the ſpace.

Ev'n poyſons praiſe thee. Should a thing be loſt?
Should creatures want, for want of heed, their due?
Since where are poyſons, antidotes are moſt;
The help ſtands cloſe, and keeps the fear in view.

The Sea, which ſeems to ſtop the Traveller,
Is by a Ship the ſpeedier paſſage made.
The Winds, who think they rule the Mariner,
Are rul'd by him, and taught to ſerve his Trade.

And as thy Houſe is full, ſo I adore
Thy curious art in marſhalling thy goods.
The Hills with health abound; the Vales with ſtore;
The South with Marble; North with Furs and Woods.

Hard things are glorious; eaſie things good cheap.
The common all men have: that which is rare,
Men therefore ſeek to have, and care to keep.
The healthy Froſts with Summer fruits compare.

Light

Light without wind is glaſs : warm without weight
Is wool and furs : cool, without cloſeneſs, ſhade :
Speed without pains, a horſe : tall without height,
A ſervile hawk : low without loſs, a ſpade.

All countreys have enough to ſerve their need :
If they ſeek fine things, thou doſt make them run
For their offence ; and then doſt turn their ſpeed
To be commerce and trade from ſun to ſun.

Nothing wears clothes but Man ; nothing doth need
But he to wear them. Nothing uſeth fire,
But Man alone, to ſhew his heav'nly breed :
And only he hath fewel in deſire.

When th' earth was dry, thou mad'ſt a ſea of wet :
When that lay gather'd, thou didſt broch the mountains
When yet ſome places could no moiſture get,
The winds grew gard'ners, and the clouds good fountains.

Rain, do not hurt my flowers ; but gently ſpend
Your honey-drops : preſs not to ſmell them here :
When they are ripe, their odour will aſcend,
And at your lodging with their thanks appear.

How harſh are thorns to pears ! and yet they make
A better hedge, and need leſs reparation.
How ſmooth are ſilks compared with a ſtake,
Or with a ſtone ! yet make no good foundation.

Sometimes thou doſt divide thy gifts to man,
Sometimes unite. The Indian nut alone
Is clothing, meat and trencher, drink and cann,
Boat, cable, ſail and needle, all in one.

Moſt

Moſt herbs that grow in brooks, are hot and dry.
Cold fruits warm kernels help againſt the wind.
The limons juice and rind cure mutually.
The whey of milk doth looſe, the milk doth bind.

Thy creatures leap not, but expreſs a feaſt,
Where all the gueſts ſit cloſe, and nothing wants.
Frogs marry fiſh and fleſh; bats, bird and beaſt;
Sponges, non-ſenſe and ſenſe; mines, th' earth and plants.

To ſhew thou art not bound, as if thy lot
Were worſe than ours, ſometimes thou ſhifteſt hands.
Moſt things move th' under-jaw; the Crocodile not.
Moſt things ſleep lying, th' Elephant leans or ſtands.

But who hath praiſe enough? nay, who hath any?
None can expreſs thy works, but he that knows them;
And none can know thy works which are ſo many,
And ſo compleat, but only he that owes them.

All things that are, though they have ſev'ral ways,
Yet in their being join with one advice
To honour thee: and ſo I give thee praiſe
In all my other hymns, but in this twice.

Each thing that is, although in uſe and name
It go for one, hath many ways in ſtore
To honour thee: and ſo each hymn thy fame
Extolleth many ways, yet this one more.

A

DISCOURSE

Concerning

ACTUAL PROVIDENCE.

PART. I.

Concerning the Nature and principal Acts of Divine Providence to all created Beings.

SERMON I.

Epheſ. I. 11.

Who worketh all things according to the Counſel of his Will.

THE Relative Particle [*who*] in the front of the Text, muſt neceſſarily relate to God ſpoken of *verſ.* 3. *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places in Chriſt.* Many of theſe *ſpiritual bleſſings* are enumerated, from that third verſe to my Text. *He hath choſen us in him before the foundation of the world, predeſtinated us unto the adoption of ſons*, verſ. 5. *Made us accepted in him*, verſ. 6. And here again, *ver.* 11. *Predeſtinated ac-*

cord-

cording to the purpose of him, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will. All this is written to those at *Ephesus*, who were *faithful in Christ Jesus*. *Ephesus* was a City in the lower *Asia*: A City famous for Trade, and as famous for their Idolatrous Worship of the great *Goddess Diana*. *Paul* came thither, *Act.* 18. 19, 20. but tarried not, being to *keep the feast at Hierusalem*, Acts 19. You find him returned thither, where he stayeth *two years* and *three months*, as you may gather from *Acts* 20. You may in that Chapter find him forced thence by an uproar of the people; during the time of his abode there, God used him to plant a *Gospel-Church*. He left the charge of it with *Timothy*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 3. *As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus*, while I went into *Macedonia*. We cannot gather from any thing in this *Epistle*, that any such corruptions in *Doctrine* or manners had crept into this Church, as had done into the Churches of *Rome*, *Corinth*, and *Galatia*; but the blessed Apostle knew, that although they stood, they were concerned to *take heed lest they fell*, and that the common temptations of those times might influence them; to obviate which he writeth this Epistle unto them. In the Preface contained in the two first verses, he after his manner saluteth them. In the third verse he begins the matter of his Epistle, minding them of the wonderful benefits, and acts of Grace, which God had made them partakers of, in, and *through Christ*. He instanceth in the *Election* of them to eternal life, as the end, and the *Predestination* of them to the means in order to that end, *ver.* 4, 5, 6, 7. Thence he proceedeth to a discourse about *Redemption*, *vers.* 8, 9, 10. In this Verse he returneth again to the business of *Predestination*. *In whom also* (saith he) *we have received an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him.* ——*Who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will.* Where you have two things affirmed concerning God.

1. *That God worketh all things.* As he at first created *all things*, so he *worketh all things*; some by way of *Efficiency*, and special influence, others by way of *Permission*; or he worketh all things, whatsoever is not sinful.

2. *That he doth it according to the counsel of his will.*

I am aware, that there are some *Divines*, who restrain the Universal Particle *all things*, to the *things before spoken of*, or at least to *all those things* which God worketh in a way of *Efficiency*.

The

The latter is *Bellarmine's sense*, for which he quoteth *Hierome*. I do rather encline to those Interpreters, who think, *all things*, are to be interpreted more generally. Nor is there any fear, that by this interpretation we should make God the *Author of sin:* for besides that, after *Bellarmine* had spit his Venom against *Calvin* and *Beza*, he could find out a way himself to entitle God to *all things*, yet not to sin; for he tells us right, *Peccatum facere est deficere*; certainly all *actions* as things, or *natural motions*, must be from him, *in whom we live, move, and have our being*; though the *irregularity, obliquity, malice and deformity, and crookedness of actions* (in which alone lyes the sinfulness of them) is not *from God*, but from the *corruption* and *malice* of the *sinners hearts*. Now the very *esse formale* of sin (if it be not improper to say so) lyeth not in the *natural action*, but in the *obliquity* and *deviation* of the *action* from the *Divine rule*; and this neither *Calvin* nor *Beza*, nor any valuable person, ever ascribed unto God. And therefore the *All things* of the Text may safely be understood, of all *beings, natural motions and actions*, and to entitle God to them, is no more than to say after the Apostle, *In him we live and move, and have our being*. Now the Text doth not only say, *That God worketh all things*, but that he worketh all things *according to the counsel of his will*, that is, an *eternal Decree* made in infinite wisdom. So that two Propositions are plain enough in the Text, 1. *That there hath been an eternal purpose and counsel of the Divine will concerning all things.* 2. *That according to this eternal counsel of the Divine will the Lord worketh all things.*

Bellar. de amiss. Gratiæ & statu peccati, cap. 15.

1 *Prop.*

2 *Prop.*

I begin with the first of these. Nothing hath come to pass, nor ever shall, but what the *will and counsel of God* hath before determined, *that it shall be*; observe that phrase, *That it shall be.* There are many things have been done, and are every day *done*, or *doing* in the world, which the *purity and holiness of God*, will allow him to have *no efficiency in*; but there is no *effect* which he hath not *willed should be done.* Indeed concerning the *means*, the primary efficient, or instrumental causes of actions, *Gods Will* hath moved variously. For all *good things, motions*, or *actions* that have *any goodness* in them, himself hath willed to do 'em, and to concur as a *principal efficient cause.* The Apostle telleth us, that *every good and perfect gift cometh down from above*, which is not only true of *spiritual gifts, habits,*

and *influences*, but of *natural actions* and *motions*, such as are purely so, and abstractly considered from any *malice* and *filthiness*, or irregularity cleaving to them; for the Apostle telleth us, *In him we live and move*. Now whereas all *motions* and *actions*, are either *good* or *evil*; as to the first, it is readily granted, the *first mover* must be the *efficient of motions*. God is the *fountain and original of all good*. And in this sense that of our Saviour is true, *There is none good but God*. There is a *goodness* in *natural habits and actions*, a goodness of *being* considering the motions and actions purely as *natural*, without the tincture of a *vitiated will*, or *affections* and *passions debauched*. There is a further goodness in *spiritual habits and actions*. All is from God, and concerning every good *action* or *motion* in either sense, there hath passed an *eternal purpose or counsel*.

The only doubt can be, is concerning *evil actions* vitiated from the *corrupt* and *debauched will, and affections and passions of men*. As to which it is on all hands most readily granted, *That God is not the author of them as such, nor willed to effect them*; he hath neither commanded them, nor approved them, but he hath *willed* that these *should be done*, he hath willed the *permission of them*. And this is so evident, both from *Scripture*, and from *Reason*, raising conclusions from *scriptural principles*, that it can with no modesty be denied. I will prove it but from one instance of Scripture, but that so high as nothing can be higher, and so plainly asserted, as nothing can be plainer.

Acts 4. 27, 28. You shall find it *Acts* 4. 27, 28. *For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the children of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done*. There certainly never was, nor is it possible there ever should be, an higher act of wickedness committed in the world, than the *adjudging to death*, and *crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ*, who was the eternal Son of God, and the most just and righteous person that ever was in the world. There was a great *Combination*, as to this *murther*, *Herod*, *Pontius Pilate*, *Judas*, the *Jews*, the *Gentiles*: *Judas* betrayed him, *Herod* mock't him, *Pontius Pilate* condemned him, the *Jews* accused him, the *Jews* and *Gentiles crucified him*. They all did their highly sinful parts. Now one would think, and may reasonably conclude, that if there ever had been, or could have been

been, an action done in the world, which had slipped the *eternal will, and counsel of God*, and come to pass whiles the *watchman of Israel had been asleep*, or which God never thought on, it should have been *this action*. But, saith the Apostle, they all in this *act*, this horrid act, did no more than what *Gods hand and counsel had before determined to be done*. The words are προωρισε γενεσθαι, Gods *Counsel* determined not to do it, but *that it should be done*. The word προωρισε is often used in holy writ, and usually it is translated *predestinated*, as *ver.* 5. of this Chapter, and in my Text; and so also *Rom.* 8. 29. *Whom he predestinated*; in 1 *Cor.* 2. 7. it is translated *ordained*. It apparently signifieth a Predetermination of persons, or things, and is used with reference to both, and that both as to *good* and *evil* things. I shall only further give you the note of a very great Divine upon it, that it signifieth such a Predetermination of things, as not only comprehendeth *the end*, but the *means* leading to that end. But in a further evidence of this, let us use our reason a little, though still exercising it upon scriptural Principles. My first argument shall be,

First, From Gods certain fore-knowledg of all things. I will open it in three things:

1. *God from all eternity did certainly and infallibly foreknow whatsoever should come to pass in the world.* The holy Scripture is very plentiful in asserting the perfection of the Divine knowledg, *Prov.* 5. 21. *The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all their goings.* Prov. 15. 3. *His eyes are everywhere beholding the evil and the good.* Psal. 139. 3. *Thou art acquainted with all my ways.* Jer. 16. 17. *Mine eyes are upon all thy ways.* Heb. 4. 13. *Neither is there any creature but is manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open to that God with whom we have to do.* 1 John 3. 20. *God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.* Now all things considered from eternity, were either *such things which it was possible might be, but never were*, nor *are*, nor *shall be*. God knew these things: *He calleth the things that are not, as if they were*, Rom. 4. 17. he *saw them in suo potenti*, as he was able to have produced them. This Divines call *scientiam simplicis intelligentiæ*. Or secondly, *They are such things as have been, now are*, or *shall be*. These things also God knew from eternity: *Divines* say, God knoweth these, *In suo volenti per scientiam visionis*. He from eter-

eternity ſaw them in a *certain futurity*, as *things which ſhould certainly be:* for God doth not know things as we do *by ſucceſſion*, one thing to day, another thing to morrow; for then there muſt have been a time when God was ignorant of ſome things, which were blaſphemy to aſſert: but ſuch is the perfect nature of God, that he muſt by the ſame Act, and at the ſame time have a perfect knowledg of all things, that ever were to come to paſs in the created world.

2. Suppoſing now that God from all eternity had ſuch a perfect knowledg of things, it followeth of neceſſity, *That they were certainly to be, and have a certain exiſtence:* for God could not know, and ſee thoſe things in a future exiſtence, of whoſe future exiſtence there was no certainty; which by the way is a concludent argument againſt the new device of *Molina*, *Fonſeca*, *Suarez*, *Leſſius*, and ſome other *Jeſuites*, ſince embraced by *Vorſtius*, *Arminius*, *Grevinchovius*, and their followers, who have deviſed a middle kind of *conditional knowledg* in God. Thus they ſay, that God knew *that* if *Peter* or *James* were in ſuch circumſtances they would believe. But this is to ſay nothing, for if there were no certainty of *Peter's* believing from eternity, God could not certainly know, what was not certainly to be.

3. Now I would gladly be inſtructed by any who ſtumbleth at this *Counſel and purpoſe of God, what but the will of God determining the event, could give a certainty of being, or exiſtence to any event?* If the things that are, might not have been, then (as I ſaid before) God from eternity could not have had a certain knowledg of them as things to be: if there were a neceſſity of their being, what could make it but the will and purpoſe of God? For example: God did from all eternity *certainly know*, that his *bleſſed Son* our *Lord* and Saviour, ſhould be born of the *Virgin Mary*, in the time of *Auguſtus Cæſar*, and here live ſome years, and then be crucified; he did certainly know, that *Herod* ſhould *mock him*, *Pilate judg* and *condemn him*, the *Jews* crucifie him. Then I ſay from all eternity, theſe things were certainly to be, otherwiſe God could not have known them: God indeed did not decree to put that malice into the heart of *Pilate*, *Herod*, or the *Jews*. But he did decree that ſuch perſons ſhould be, and to ſuffer them to execute that malice of their hearts, yea and to influence them to thoſe actions,

ſo

so far as they were natural actions: without that influence, neither *Herod* could have opened his mouth to *mock him*, nor *Pilate* to condemn him; nor could the *Jews* have lifted up their hands, to have either made a cross, or driven a nail. That indeed they used this their natural strength, and power, their tongues and hands thus wickedly, and maliciously, this was from the Devil, and from their own lusts; but God willed that it should be done, though he did not will to do it in a way of efficiency. This was that which gravelled *Vorstius* (a man of a clear head, and great Learning and Reason, though corrupt, having not learned to submit his Reason to the Word of God), so that he confesseth it a very great difficulty to fix *an immutable cause of the certain existence of future contingencies:* he reckons up all that is said, and at last reckons this for one opinion, *The determination of the Divine will*, in which God beheld all things as certainly decreed, which were to be effected, as in the first efficient cause effectually decreeing them. He saith, *That as this is the most received, so it is the truest opinion, if it be not extended to all future things, even to sins*, &c. And again he tells us, *That whatsoever we fix as the cause either of Gods fore-knowledg, or the future existence of things, we shall everywhere find* Labyrinthum inexplicabilem, *an inexplicable Labyrinth.* And indeed it is not to be determined, *How God should know all things from all eternity, if he had not willed them to be*, either by his *efficiency* or *permission.* And our adversaries you see in this point, agree it the best way to fix it there; only they are afraid, *If God willed sin to be*, he must needs *be the author of it:* That we deny, we say he did not will the infusion of any sinful habit, nor the doing of any sinful act, only that it should be done; and you heard before, the Scripture speaketh plainly enough in this case, That the Counsel of God had determined that should be done, which was done against Christ by *Herod*, *Pontius Pilate*, and the *Jews*.

Vorstius de Deo, & Attr. Not. ad Disp. 5. p. 260. *V. etiam*, 267, 268.

2. My second proof shall be from the *actual Providence of God*, extending to all *motions* and *actions*. The Scripture is full of expressions, proving this, *In him we live, move, and have our being*, Acts 17. *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*, *John* 5. 17. My Text saith, *He worketh all things.* The actual Providence of God is a certain Servant to the Eternal Will, Purpose, and Counsel of God. It doth but execute the eternal thoughts

thoughts and decrees. Look as every rational agent firſt thinketh, deliberateth, and determineth with himſelf what to do, and then his hands are employed to execute his purpoſes and deliberations: ſo God being the higheſt rational *Agent*, doth nothing in time, which did not meet with an eternal thought, nothing but what he had from eternity reſolved, and determined ſhould be done. Firſt, the Counſel of his Will paſſed upon the thing that it ſhould be, then his Providence bringeth it about, though in a different manner ſuited to the purity and holineſs of God: for *God cannot be the author of ſin.* The Providence of God therefore, as to actions that are evil, only *permits* the filth and obliquity of them, though it further concurreth to the motion, or action, as it is natural (for ſo it hath a goodneſs in it). As the Writing-maſter guideth the childs-hand in the Writing of its Letters, but guideth it not to make blots, or any crooked or irregular ſtrokes; though it is true of him alſo, that if he pleaſed, he could hold the childs hand ſo ſteady, and ſo far influence it, that it ſhould not make an irregular ſtroke. The *Jews* ſpit upon our Saviours face, they nailed him to the Croſs; if God by his Providence had not aſſiſted their natural faculties to theſe actions, ſo far as they were natural, meerly natural, they could not have ſpoke or ſpit, nor moved an hand to lift up a crown of Thorns to his head, nor to have driven a nail into his fleſh. God did concur to uphold their natural ſtrength to their natural action: but now, That they ſpake bad words, rather than good, to, and of our bleſſed Lord; that they uſed their natural power to ſpit, (to the uſe of which God by his Providence concurred, rather to ſpit) upon Chriſts face than upon the ground, and their ſtrength rather to drive a nail into Chriſts fleſh than into the bare wood, and to work in their honeſt and lawful occupation; *this was from the luſt of their own hearts.* Their ſin was not in *ſpitting* or *ſpeaking*, or *driving a nail*, but in ſpitting on Chriſts face, in ſpeaking evil, and blaſphemouſly of Chriſt, in piercing his fleſh with their nails: This God had nothing further to do with, *than to permit*; for the juſt puniſhment of their former ſin, and for the further working out of his own Glory in the ſalvation of thoſe for whom Chriſt dyed. In the mean time the *Providence of God had its place* about their ſinful actions, though not *cauſing*, or any way *effecting* them, yet *permitting*, and not hinder-

hindering the doing of them, in assisting to the actions so far as they were natural. And this motion of Divine Providence, (which is but a servant to the Divine Counsel), doth certainly conclude such a Divine Counsel, according to the nature of the operation of Providence. And this is enough to establish the Proposition.

This Proposition in the first place sheweth us the *Vanity* of those who dream of an *incertainty* in the *effects* of *Divine Providence*: with *reference to us* there is a great *incertainty*, we *know not what a day will bring forth*; but in it self there is none, there is nothing but hath met with an *eternal thought*. The truth is, a *certainty of Divine knowledg* doth necessarily infer a *certainty of events*; for God could not have a certain knowledg from eternity of such things, as in themselves were *incertain*, whether they *should be or no*. *Vorstius* grants that God is *omniscient*; but he expounds it thus, that he doth, *Omnia scibilia exactissime scire quo quidem modo ipsa scibilia sunt*; That God knows all that could be known, in that manner that they were to be known: so then it seems there were some things that could *not be known* by him who *calleth the things that are not as if they were*. I wonder what these things should be? he will tell you, Those things which depend *upon the liberty of mans will*. So then here is another *first cause* and *mover set up*, and God knows nothing of the effects and motions of that, till they discover themselves in action. And I beseech you, consider how great a part of the *Divine Knowledg* this takes away. God according to this Doctrine could not from eternity certainly know any thing that *depended upon the will of man*, so that it leaveth God *no certain knowledg*, but of things in their own nature *necessary*, which is a strange notion of God, yet necessary to be held by all those who are the Advocates of *free-will*, otherwise than as *freedom* is opposed to force and *coaction*: for if man hath a power to *believe*, or not to *believe*, God could not from *eternity* certainly know that man should *believe*, because he might not believe. I cannot understand how this assertion of the *necessity of events*, in regard of the Counsel of God concernig them, should (as they say) take away the *Providence of God*: for what do they mean by Providence, but Gods continual *inspection of created Beings*; his continual influence upon them to *preserve* and *uphold* their beings and faculties,

Use 1.

Vorstius de Deo, in Not. ad Disp. 5. p. 268.

ties, and to *govern* their actions. Now ſuppoſing that God hath determined all Events, why he ſhould not yet inſpect all Agents, and uphold their powers and faculties to thoſe actions, which he hath willed to permit or effect, in order to the production of ſuch effects and ends, and to govern all their motions and actions in order to that end, I cannot tell. Do they contend for a *liberty* for God to alter the *ſeries* and *courſe* in which *his will* hath ſet all things? This indeed were reaſonable for fooliſh man, whoſe ſecond *thoughts uſe to be beſt*; and whom ſucceſſion of time teacheth knowledg; but not for God, whoſe will never moved, but circumſtanced with that infinite wiſdom, that required not a ſecond thought, and whoſe name is *I am*, and his will as immutable as his eſſence. But I haſten to ſomething from this Doctrine, which ſhall be more practical.

Uſe 2. This notion of the *certainty of events* from an eternal purpoſe of God, may be of great uſe *for the quiet, ſtay, comfort and ſatisfaction of religious ſouls, under the ingrateful contingencies of this life; whether cauſed from the immediate hand of God, or from the malice and wickedneſs of men.* There is nothing which cometh ſo to paſs, but there firſt paſſed upon it the Counſel of the Divine Will: Then, a working of Divine Providence, either effecting, or permitting it, immediately influencing the Agent, if it be good; permitting the oblique motions of mans will to it, and in it, his luſts and paſſions in their boyſterous motions, if the thing be evil. We are creatures who are full of paſſions, exceedingly ſubject to the exorbitancies, and over-boylings of them. In reference to *evil*, that is, things that are not pleaſing to our external ſenſes, there are two or three paſſions, which give us moſt, or all of the trouble of our lives. *Fear*, that torments us upon the proſpect of ſome great evil probable, or likely to fall upon us. *Grief*, that drowneth us upon the *over-flowing* of ſome *Divine ſcourge* upon our *perſons, families*, or *intereſts in the world*. *Anger*, that *corrodes*, and conſumes us, becauſe we cannot be *revenged* upon ſuch as have been the *inſtruments* of any evil to us.

In the operations of all theſe, our corrupt nature is very prone to exorbitancy. Now under all accidents, apt to elicite, irritate, or inflame theſe paſſions, and ſo to diſorder, and to ſpoil the quiet and compoſure of our minds, it ſhould mightily ſtay

us, that nothing is *casual or contingent to God*; nothing cometh to pass in time, but what he hath from all eternity determined, and set in order: man hath done, can do no more, than what God hath purposed, nor suffer more than what he hath fixed by the eternal *counsel of his will*. There are two necessary consequents of this *eternal Predestination*, and *Predestination of God*, which if duly weighed, will wonderfully relieve, and stay the hearts of Gods People under the troublesom accidents and contingencies of this life.

1. *That although the Will and Counsel of God putteth no force upon rational agents*, nor offers any *violence to humane will, yet it layeth a necessity upon the event*. This is what a Generation in the world will not understand, but nothing can be plainer to any who have ears to hear, or a mind to understand. Gods Counsel (as you heard) predetermined the death of Jesus Christ: the Scripture plainly saith, That *Herod*, *Pontius Pilate*, and the *Jews*, did no more than what *the Counsel of God had determined to be done*, Act. 4. 28. I would fain know now, whether (as to the event) it had been possible that *Pontius Pilate* should not have condemned, or the *Jews* should not have crucified Christ; *Who hath resisted his will at any time*? Yet certainly none will say, but as to the *action Judas* was not forced to betray him, nor *Pilate* to condemn him; they acted freely as to their action, although the event was necessary. Gods Counsel *influenced the event*, but not their wills to move them to the *action*. But I say, the *necessity of the event*, though it doth not justifie the *Agent*, nor authorize the Act; yet it is of wonderful use to satisfie such, as suffer under such events; and that upon a double account.

1. As it letteth us know, *That all our trouble and sollicitude, all our fears, griefs, all our suspicions, jealousies, and condemnings of our selves, for any omissions, or neglects of means are in vain, and to no purpose*. The thing must, or will be, it must, or would have been; God had determined it, there was an eternal Counsel had passed upon it. We are very prone upon sad events, to torture our selves with such reflexions as these; If this or that thing had not been done, if this or that means had not been used, this thing had not been, such a friend had not dyed, such a mischief had not befallen me. *Lord!* (saith *Martha*, John 11. 21.) *if thou hadst been here, my brother had not dyed.*

We are wonderfully miſtaken in theſe things: It is true, that our knowledg that *events are certain*, is no juſtification of us in the neglect of the uſe of any means in order to the obtaining any good we deſire, or preventing or removing of any evil upon us, or imminent over us: and the reaſon is plain, 1. *Becauſe though the event be certain, yet we are not aſſured of it:* and as to duty, the caſe is the ſame of things which are not, and which appear not to us. 2. *Becauſe that God, who hath willed us any good, or the preventing or removing of any evil*, hath willed both the one, and the other to be obtained, in the uſe of ſuch means, as either in a natural way of working, or upon the evidence of reaſon, or direction of Scripture, appear proper for the obtaining it. And 3. *It is the Command of God we ſhould uſe means.* But ſuppoſing no means neglected, the *Predetermination of God ought to ſatisfie us*, though we miſs of ſome good, which we paſſionately deſired, or ſuffer under the preſſure of ſome evil, which we paſſionately deſired a deliverance from, and uſed all means in our power to be freed of: it ſhould alſo quiet us as to any fears that are immoderate, and diſtracting our minds concerning any evil likely to befal us, or any who relate to us, when we have it in proſpect, and ſee it hanging over our heads. It may alſo be of great uſe to ſtill our ſpirits concerning means, leſs ſucceſsfully, and ineffectually uſed to prevent ſuch evils; yet, as I ſaid before, and for the reaſons I before mentioned, we muſt take heed of thinking that this *certainty of the event*, from the *Divine Preſcience* and Will, giveth us any thing of a *ſuperſedeas*, as to the uſe of any proper means, which we are equally obliged to uſe, as if the event had been incertain and caſual, and might as well not have been, as been.

2. But there is more yet in this notion, to ſatisfie every good Chriſtian; for if *all events* (how ingrateful ſoever to us) are according to the *eternal purpoſe of God*, and the *Counſel of the Divine Will*, 1. They neceſſarily muſt be *good*. 2. *The products of infinite wiſdom*. 3. And of *infinite love*, and *goodneſs* to ſuch, as *love* and *fear God*.

1. I ſay they *neceſſarily muſt be good*. I mean this of ſuch as God hath willed to *effect*, not ſuch events as God hath only willed to permit. But of the firſt ſort are all *evils of puniſhment*. It is not beneath God to be the Author of his own Judgments: Evils of affliction are only nominally, and nuncupatively

ly evil, and called so according to the language and apprehension of our sense.

2. They must needs be the *products of infinite wisdom.* The *Psalmist* speaking of the *works of God*, saith, *In wisdom hath he made them all.* It is true of Gods Counsels, in *infinite wisdom* God hath established them all; so as all events are fixed in the best order imaginable, for the *glorifying of God*, which is the highest end any action can be levelled and directed to. It is the highest end which God could act for; because he could work for no higher, he hath wrought, and still worketh for himself: it is the highest end that we can act for, and that to which as we ought to direct all our actions, so we also ought to submit all our passions. The sum of all our Prayers is, or should be, *Let the Lord be glorified:* If God be glorified, every good man hath his highest wish, his utmost design, and desire. Now if all events were from eternity set in order, and predetermined by a *Counsel of the Divine Will*; they must be ordered to the Glory of God, because they are ordered by and in infinite wisdom, which always directeth the best means, in order to the best end. God could not be deceived in his contrivement, and proportioning of means, in order to his own ends. Although therefore we may, and ought to mourn, and be afflicted, for many things which we see done under the Sun; because they are brought to pass by the *lusts, malice*, and *wickedness of men*; by their sinful corruptions and passions, by which God is highly dishonoured, and it may be we cannot understand what honour God can have from the event it self; yet we ought at last to recollect our selves, and get victory over our passions, and to say, *Was not the hand of God in this thing?* Was this a slip of the eternal Counsel, or was it a product of it? Surely nothing slipt the *Divine notice*; whatever happens, was ordered by him, who was infinitely *wise in Counsel*, who could order nothing but in *infinite wisdom*, and in subserviency to the great end of his actions, the *Glory of his Name.* Every good Christian therefore ought at last to satisfie himself as to what he seeth before him in the world, and to say, Let come what will of me, and mine, or of a thousand others little concerns, I am frustrated of my expectations and desires; I thought God might have been more glorified my way, I see I was mistaken. God cannot be frustrated of his ends, nor be deceived as to means proper

for

for the compaſſing of them. This thing came not to paſs without the eternal Counſel of the Divine Will. God is true to his own end; he would never have decreed to have permitted it, nor have permitted it actually, if he had not known how to have compaſſed his Glory by, and from it, when done: *Surely, the wrath of man ſhall praiſe him.* I cannot ſee the Wiſdom of God in it, but there is an infinite wiſdom in it; and when the Lords work is finiſhed, I ſhall then ſee it, and be able to underſtand what I now do not. I cannot look to ſee the bottom of Divine Wiſdom.

3. But this is not all: ſuppoſing this, *All events and accidents muſt to thoſe who love and fear God, be not only the products of infinite wiſdom, with reſpect to Gods glory, which is the higheſt end, but with reſpect alſo to their good*; and this not only in regard of the *Promiſe, That all things ſhall work together for the good of them that love God*; but alſo of his fatherly *relation unto them, All things are theirs, becauſe they are Chriſts*, and Chriſt is Gods. God hath ſaid concerning them, that *with an everlaſting love he hath loved them*; and having done ſo, all his *eternal counſels*, all the motions of his Providence, muſt be ordered to the Demonſtration of it; and this every Child of God ſhall firſt or laſt ſee. It falleth out with us, as with an *ignorant perſon*, which goeth into a Limners Shop; he ſeeth there a rude and imperfect draught of a picture, and thinketh that it looks ugly; but he ſeeth not the *Idea* of the intended draught in the Limners fancy, and hath not patience to wait, until he hath finiſhed his work, which if he had, he would then ſee it a very beautiful piece. Thus many of us looking upon Gods Works before they be finiſhed, we paſs an ill judgment upon them. But could we but ſee the *Platform* or *Idea* of them in the *eternal Counſel* of the Divine Will, or ſtay with patience till the Providence of God had finiſhed his work, we ſhould then apprehend it beautiful, and very agreeable to the Glory, Wiſdom, Mercy, Truth, and Goodneſs of that God, which it is produced to demonſtrate to the world; and that we cannot ſee this before, is our weakneſs and imperfection. The malice of men in the perſecutions of Gods People, looketh upon us with an horrid aſpect: theſe indeed God doth not effect, but he hath willed they ſhould be, and hath told us, they muſt come, yea, and he worketh too permitting others to bring them about, and ſuffering them in the execution of their malice, whom he could eaſily hin-

hinder: but when these things are over, we often see both infinite wisdom and goodness too in them. How should the salvation of Sinners have been purchased, if God had not permitted *Judas* to have betrayed his Master, *Pilate to have condemned him*, and the *Jews* to have nailed him to the Cross? had it not been for the persecution of the *Jews*, how should the Gospel have gone to the *Gentiles?* But yet for a close of this discourse, and that we may not mistake our Duty, we ought not to be so far satisfied upon the Contemplation of this great truth; but that,

1. *We must be piously affected with the sad Providences which God measureth out to his Church and People.* What saith the *Psalmist, If I forget thee, O Hierusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.* The sad rebukes of Gods Providence ought by us to be laid to heart. Though persecutions and other punishments be contrivances of infinite wisdom, and products of certain and infinite love; yet to the present sufferers, they may be punishments of sin, and marks of Divine displeasure, and therefore ought not to pass over our heads, without our taking some notice of them, and the causing of some sad thoughts within us: the crucifying of Christ was the product of infinite wisdom and goodness to the People of God, but yet a just cause of sadness to the Disciples of Christ. We must take things as they appear to us, being not able to see to the end and bottom of Gods designs. That they shall at last issue in the Glory of God, and the good of his People, is indeed matter of faith, and will be matter of joy to us, when we see it; but in the mean time it is matter of sadness to us, to see Gods Vineyard rooted up, his People eaten up like bread, and wicked men suffered to devour those that are more righteous than themselves.

2. Again, We have reason to be afflicted both for our own sins, and the sins of others. Although it be as to the event true, that both our own and others sins shall issue in Gods Glory; yet it is as true, that God hath no need either of ours or any others lyes for his Glory, and that God is both by our sins, and the sins of others actually dishonoured. That they are made to issue in Gods Glory, is the product of Gods Wisdom, not our oblique and irregular action or intention, and therefore they ought to be causes of sad reflexion to us. But thus far we may satisfie our selves, 1. *That* (as I said before) *the event was necessary*, and nothing that hath come to pass, could, with our utmost care and diligence, have been otherwise

wiſe than it is. We may talk after the manner of men, and reaſon after the meaſures of humane probabilities: *If ſuch a thing had not been, another had not followed*; but there is nothing iſſued in time, but was ordered from all eternity. 2. We ought again in this to be ſatisfied, *That of whatſoever the Lord hath promiſed, nothing ſhall fail.* We are full of *unbelief*, and when we ſee *Gods Providence* working (as we judg) directly contrary to what he hath promiſed, we are preſently giving up all for gone and loſt; but if every thing be wrought according to the Counſel of the Divine Will, and the Holy Scriptures be ſuch part of this will, as he hath pleaſed to reveal to us, God knoweth both what he hath ſaid, and how he hath laid things in his eternal thoughts, and ſooner ſhall Heaven and Earth paſs away, than any word he hath ſpoke: *The counſel of the Lord ſhall ſtand: and the word of our God ſhall ſtand for ever.*

Prov. 19. 21. Iſa. 40. 8.

3. And laſtly, As I have before told you, we may be thus far ſatisfied, *That whatſoever doth, or ever ſhall come to paſs in the world, ſhall ſerve Gods great ends*; becauſe it is ordered by the Counſel of the infinitely wiſe God, and therefore muſt neceſſarily ſerve his deſigns. In the end of the world we ſhall ſay, God could not have had ſo much Glory, but for ſuch a perſecution, ſuch a diſorder. *Surely the wrath of man ſhall praiſe him.*

SERMON

SERMON II.

Heb. XI. 3.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God: so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear.

THE last time I shewed you, That God hath from eternity setled all events by an eternal purpose, according to the Counsel of his Will; nothing cometh to pass in time, but what was determined before time. I told you my design was to discourse concerning Gods Acts of Providence, which are acts in time; and particularly to discourse some things relating to actual Providence, which do not fall into ordinary discourse, and often give occasion of trouble to the spirits of Christians: but in order to that, I thought it reasonable, First, to discourse a little of Gods Settlement of all futurities (things which were to be fulfilled in their season), by an act of his eternal Counsel. Nor can I yet come fairly at my intended subject, without speaking to Gods first Act in time (that was *Creation*); concerning which we must suppose a Decree of God, according to that known Rule in Divinity, *Decretum Dei, & ejus executio exquisitissime conveniunt; nihil est in Dei opere, quod non fuit in decreto, & nihil fuit in decreto quod non sequitur in opere.* That is, the Decree of God, and the execution of that Decree, most exquisitely agree: God worketh nothing but what he first decreed, and he decreed nothing but hath had, or shall have its issue in his working: and when we say God doth any thing, we by it do understand no more than a new effect of his eternal Will. According therefore to the Counsel of his Will, God

first made of nothing, the world, and all that is therein. And indeed, according to some notion of Providence amongst Divines, this is a part of it. Now for a foundation of a short Discourse upon this subject, I have chosen this Text.

The Apostle subjoyneth the words of my Text, to a description of Faith, which he had given, *vers.* 1. Where he had told us, *That faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* In the second verse he had told us, *That by this the Elders had obtained a good report.* Here he saith, *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God,* &c. In the Text you have,

1. A *Divine assertion. The worlds were framed by God: things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear.* You have the work of *Creation* described in its Causes: *Negatively*, the world did not make it self, one part of it did not make another; then *Positively*, it was *framed by God*; καταρτίζομαι, is the word used.

2. You have the way described, how we come to comprehend this in our understanding: *By faith.* The Proposition of the Text is this:

Prop. *That by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by God: and the things which are seen, were not made by those things which do appear.* Here are two things:

1. *The worlds were framed by the Word of God: the things seen, were not made of those things which do appear.*
2. *We understand this, Through faith.*

In the opening of these I must enquire,

1. *What is here meant by the Worlds?* Τοὺς αἰῶνας.
2. What is the meaning of this, *That the worlds were made by the Word of God.*
3. What is the meaning of this? *That the things which are seen, are not made of those things which do appear.*
4. What is here meant *by faith*, or *through faith*?
5. *How do we understand it by faith, that the worlds were framed by God?* After this, I shall come to the Application.

Quest. 1. *What is here meant by* the Worlds?

The word here used [αἰων] doth often signifie *an age*, sometimes (and so generally in St. *John*'s Gospel, *Eternity*), but is sometimes in Scripture translated, *World*, Matth. 12. 32. *The*

blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come, ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι τῷ αἰῶνι. So *Matth.* 13. 32, 39, 40, 49. The harveſt is *the end of the world*, Heb. 1. 2. *By whom he made* τοὺς αἰῶνας, *the worlds.* The term properly ſignifieth, *The duration of the world*; but in *Heb.* 1. 2. and here it muſt ſignifie the *Maſs*, the things of it. It carries here its own Interpreter with it in the other part of the Text, τὰ βλεπόμενα, *The things which are ſeen*; but neither is that term adequate to it: the object of *Creation* is larger than the objects of Senſe; Spirits are not ſeen, but yet they are created. Let *Moſes* expound it, *Gen.* 1. 1. *In the beginning God created the heaven and earth.* In ſhort, all the Creatures, whatſoever is not the Creator, muſt here fall under the notion of αἰῶνας, *the world, and all that is therein* (excepting him who as the *Creator* made all, *and filleth heaven and earth*), the *world*, and the things thereof: the world, and the perſons therein; heaven and earth, the world of *things*, and the world of perſons: this world was made, καταρτίσθαι.

1. The word in the Greek ſignifies, *to make, to joynt, or fit together, to reſtore*: it ſignifieth, *to make*, or rather to *make up* (according to our *Engliſh* Idiom), *to perfect*. It is uſed *Matth.* 21. 16. *Thou haſt perfected praiſe*: we tranſlate it *perfect*, or *perfected*, Luk. 6. 40. *And be you perfect*, 2 Cor. 13. 11. 1 Theſ. 3. 10. That we might *perfect that which is lacking in your faith*, Heb. 10. 5. *A body haſt thou prepared* [or made me]. So *Heb.* 13. 21. The world was *made*, eſtabliſhed, made perfect by God: *Ut totum quidpiam quod ſuis omnibus partibus apte inter ſe cohærentibus componitur*: The worlds gave not a being to themſelves, they were not *eternal*, and of an original from themſelves, nor made of any caſual concurrence of Atoms, according to the Heathens Philoſophy; but they had their Original, their perfection, their eſtabliſhment from God.

2. The word ſignifieth to be *made perfect*, to joynt, to be put together. The world is a beautiful compoſition, it hath not only a Being, but a beautiful Being, all the parts of it being *fitted and joynted together*; this is alſo from *God*: it oweth not only its *Being* and *Original* unto God, but whatſoever it hath of *Beauty* and *Ornament*; that one part of it is fitted to another, the beautiful compoſition of it, the ſubordination of the parts of it one to another, all this is owing unto God. This is part

of the ſenſe of it, 1 *Cor.* 1. 10. *That you may be perfectly joyned together.* Whoſo looketh upon the Creation wiſtly, muſt ſee it conſiſt of a great variety of things; but all fitted together, ſo as there is no diſcord, but a beautiful ſubordination of things in that vaſt compoſition: ſo as they ſerve one another, and notwithſtanding all their different affections and qualities; yet they deſtroy not, nor invade each other: this alſo is from the Lord. The world was not only by God made, and produced out of a *not-being*, into a *being*; but it was fitted, ordered, joynted together by God.

3. The word ſignifieth alſo to *reſtore*, and *bring again into order*, what is diſordered; and ſo it is uſed ſometimes to *mend* nets: *Rem laceram aliquam reſarcire & collapſam reparare.* And this ſeemeth to be the primary and moſt proper ſignification of the word. Thus it is tranſlated, *reſtore*, *Gal.* 6. 1. *If a brother be fallen, reſtore ſuch a one.* A *Metaphor*, ſay ſome, taken from *Chyrurgions*, putting a bone out of order into its place again. The world at firſt made, perfected, eſtabliſhed, and joynted by God, in the Fall of *Adam* was diſordered, and put out of joynt: God by ſending his Son, put the world in joynt again; ſet its broken bones, created a *new heaven, and a new earth.* Thus alſo the *worlds were made*, as it were made again, and reſtored by God. But I take the two former ſenſes rather to agree to this place; where the Apoſtle rather ſpeaks of the firſt Creation of the world by God, than of the Redemption of it by Jeſus Chriſt. The world then was made, that is, it had its firſt Original, its Order, Ornaments, beautiful compoſure, from a Divine creating Power; it did not give a Being, nor a Beauty and Perfection to it ſelf. The Verb is *paſſive*, it had its Original from another, and this other was *he* whom we call God. But,

Queſt. 2. *What is the meaning of this, that the worlds were made by the Word of God?*

None can underſtand here by the Word of God, *the Holy Scriptures*, which are called the *Word*, that is, the *revealed will* of God, ſpoken by holy men, as they were inſpired by God. Nor do I think that the ſame is meant here by the Word of God, that is underſtood, *John* 1. 1. *In the beginning was the word*: of that *word* it is ſaid, *That it was with God* in the beginning:

ginning: *that it was God; all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made:* that is to be underſtood of Chriſt. Of him our Apoſtle ſaith, *Heb.* 1. 2. *By whom alſo he made the worlds:* but beſides that, the Goſpel of *John* ſeemeth to be the only Scripture in which the ſecond perſon in the Trinity is ſtiled the *Word*; neither is he there call'd *the Word of God*; it is there ſaid, *The word was God, and in the beginning with God*, but he is no-where call'd the word of God. I chuſe therefore rather to interpret it of that word of *Power* and *Command* which *Moſes Gen.* 1. telleth us, God uſed in the making of the world, and the fitting and joynting of it together. He ſaid, *Let there be light, and there was light*, &c. Thus the Worlds were made by the Word of God, ſo as the term is both *excluſive* of any other inſtrumental cauſe in the Creation of the world, and *expreſſive* of the true *inſtrumentally* efficient cauſe, which was the mighty, powerful, commanding virtue of the Word of God. And this is enough for the explication of this term. But,

Queſt. 3. *What is the meaning of this, that the things which are ſeen, are not made of thoſe things which do appear.*

The *Vulgar Latin* Verſion reads, *Ut ex inviſibilibus viſibilia fierent*, that viſible things ſhould be made of thoſe which are inviſible, by a tranſpoſition of μὴ, as if it were not, μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων, but ἐκ μὴ φαινομένων; but our Copies are otherwiſe. If by the *inviſible things* be meant, thoſe inviſible things of God the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, *Rom.* 1. 20. *His eternal power and godhead:* So it is true, and the ſenſe much the ſame with what went before; but elſe it is as *Beza* ſaith, *Perperam, immo falſe.* Some would make the ſenſe of the words this, That the world was not made of thoſe things which now do appear to us, and are the objects of our ſenſes; but of *inviſible principles and elements*, which are not now the objects of our ſenſes. Others thus, That it was made according to an inviſible Platform and Idea (which was *Plato's* notion). Others ſay, That by *inviſible things*, or things which do not appear, is to be meant *nothing*; that muſt be an inviſible thing, and the world was not made of any pre-exiſtent matter; but it was created, that is, produced out of a *meer and total not being, into a being.* Which ſenſe, if we allow, the Apoſtle by it, as to the Creation of the world, aſſert-

eth the Truth of God againſt the Heathen Philoſophers, who could not by reaſon comprehend how ſomething (eſpecially ſuch a ſomething as the world is) ſhould come out of *nothing*; and therefore grew very vain in their imaginations, about the pre-exiſting matter of which the world ſhould be made. *Eſtius* and *Calvin* alſo take notice of a much differing ſenſe, as if τὰ βλεπόμενα, ſignified τὰ καλόπτρα, and it were to be read thus, *We by faith underſtand that the worlds were made by the Word of God, that they might be the looking-glaſſes of thoſe things which do not appear.* The thing indeed is true, for the Apoſtle telleth us, *Rom.* 1. 20. *That the inviſible things of God are known by the things that are made:* But I cannot agree it the ſenſe of this Text, not only for that (which *Beza* noteth) that it is a very harſh interpretation to interpret βλεπόμενα, by καλόπτρα; but becauſe (as *Pareus* obſerveth) it ſeemeth not to be any thing of the Apoſtle's deſign to expreſs the end here, why the *World's* were made by God. I do therefore take the Text to be a Divine aſſertion of the Creation of the World, againſt the vain imaginations of the Heathens; who either dream't that it was *eternal*, or made of a *caſual concourſe of Atoms*, or from ſome *Idea's*. It was, ſaith the Apoſtle, made of *nothing by the Word of God*, of *nothing* that doth appear. And ſo I have done with the firſt Member of the Propoſition, *That the worlds were framed by the Word of God: the things which are ſeen, were not made of thoſe things which do appear.* I proceed to the ſecond.

Mem. 2. *That we underſtand this by faith.* Here I ſhall ſpeak to two things: 1. *What is here meant by faith?* 2. *How do we by faith underſtand this?*

Faith in Scripture ſometimes ſignifieth *the object of faith*, the Word of God. Thus *Gal.* 1. 23. *He which perſecuted us in times paſt, now preacheth the faith which he once deſtroyed.* Thus you read of the *hearing of faith*, Gal. 3. 2. *Received you the ſpirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith*; that is, of the *Word of God*, particularly the Goſpel? ſometimes it ſignifieth the *act of faith*, which as it reſpecteth the *Propoſition of the word* for its object, is a *firm and ſteady aſſent*, the agreement of the mind to the truth of the Propoſition; as it *reſpecteth the perſon of the Mediator*, is a *reſting, relying, and recumbency upon him*, which is what we call the *juſtifying act of faith:* you may underſtand the term *Faith* in either ſenſe. By the *word of faith*

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revealing it, and by our ſouls acting faith, in agreeing and aſſenting to the truth of that word; we underſtand that the world, *heaven and earth*, was at firſt brought into being, fitted and joynted together by the powerful Word of God, commanding the production of all thoſe Beings which are in the world, and that beauty and order in which we ſee them placed.

But ſecondly, *How doth the Apoſtle ſay we underſtand it by faith?* May not this be underſtood by Reaſon? if it may, what need Faith in the caſe? or why, or how doth the Apoſtle ſay, *by faith* we underſtand this? Wherein doth Faith give us a further knowledg of this, than Reaſon hath given the Philoſopher?

To which I anſwer; Undoubtedly *reaſon* hath gone a great way, and may go a great way to make men underſtand, *that the world was made by God.* That the world was *eternal*, was indeed the opinion of a great Pagan Philoſopher; but his maſter *Plato* was of another mind, and he is ſaid to have learned it from *Heſiod:* and the moſt and wiſeſt amongſt the Heathens, acknowledged that the world was at firſt by a *Divine power* produced out of a *not-being* into a *being.* Nor indeed would their Reaſon allow them to judg otherwiſe; the infinite motions (the meaſures of things in the world), their order and ſucceſſion, their alterations and corruptions duly conſidered, forbiddeth reaſonable ſouls, with any conſiſtency to themſelves, to affirm the world to have had an eternal exiſtence. All motions muſt be in time, and have had a being; all ſucceſſions and corruptions of things plainly ſpeak, that they had a beginning; if we had no aſſiſtance in the proof of it from the word of faith.

2. The ſame Reaſon will agree that it gave not a firſt being to it ſelf, *nothing is the efficient cauſe of it ſelf:* experience tells us, that it is not in the power of a man to make the leaſt hair of his head white or black, much leſs to make an hair. Man is the nobleſt ſublunary Creature, but cannot make the meaneſt vegetable; all that his art can do, is but to counterfeit and diſſemble nature; if it be but as to a ſpire of graſs, or to the meaneſt flower of the field.

Now *if it were not eternal:* if it did not make it ſelf: if one part of it did not make another; it muſt be made by God.

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The *worlds comprehending* Angels and Men, ſenſitive and vegetative creatures; theſe all having had a beginning, and none of them being able to give being to another: we muſt in reaſon find out a more powerful and excellent firſt being, that muſt give being to all the beings in the world. This firſt being is that glorious infinite being, whom we call *God*. In ſhort, he that further conſidereth the world in its ſtructure and compoſition, as one part is knit and united to another: he that conſidereth the *multitude* of the creatures, their *magnitude*; the great and excellent *powers*, *vertues*, *and qualities* of ſome of them; the *Symmetry* of the ſeveral parts of the world, their ſubordinations each to other; muſt needs in reaſon, and by the force of that conclude, *That the worlds were made by God.*

So that the Apoſtle's words muſt not be underſtood *excluſively*; not as if we could no way but *by faith* underſtand this: It may be underſtood by Reaſon; and many that knew nothing of Faith, yet confeſſed it, and agreed it from the evidence of their Reaſon. Yet is not *Faith* and *Reaſon* to be confounded: Reaſon concludeth from connate, natural principles; Faith from acquired, revealed principles: neither evidence contradicteth each other. We underſtand it by *reaſon* more darkly, confuſedly, imperfectly, faintly; *by faith* we underſtand it more *clearly*, *diſtinctly*, more *perfectly*, and *fixedly*. By Reaſon we underſtand a little thereof: by the Revelation of faith we underſtand it fully. Let me a little further open this to you in three or four particulars.

1. Reaſon rather ſheweth us, *that the world*, then, *that the worlds are made by God*. It rather evidenceth to us the Creation of ſublunary things, which are ſubject to our ſenſes, whoſe natures and accidents we underſtand; than of thoſe things which are above the air. Reaſon will evidence to us, that the men of the world, the beaſts and plants are made by God; but we ſee the wits of the world diſputing whether there be any *ſpirits* or no: Reaſon layeth hold upon the alterations and corruptions of ſenſible beings, that have quantity, and concludeth their Original from their corruptibility; but when we come to ſpeak of thoſe Beings, that have no quantity, but are meerly ſpiritual, and not ſubject to thoſe changes and corruptions, Reaſon is at a loſs in a great meaſure: here *Faith* (Revelation which is the object of Faith) muſt help us. That teacheth us,

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the *worlds* were made by God: the world of *inviſibles*, and things not ſubjected to ſenſe, as well as the world of *ſenſibles*. Reaſon will help us to conclude God *the Father of all fleſh*; but not that he is the *Father of all ſpirits*, while it prompteth us to diſpute whether there be any ſuch Beings as Spirits, yea or no. Reaſon would hardly have agreed ſuch Beings as Angels, if Revelation had not come in to make it a foundation to ſtand upon; but *by faith* we underſtand it. Suppoſing the holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, it is clear enough there; and we cannot agree to the Scriptures, but we muſt agree to it; both that there are ſuch Beings as Spirits (ſubſtances without ſenſible matter), and that they were alſo made by God: being ſome of thoſe things in the Heavens, of which God was the Creator.

2. Suppoſing that Reaſon will tell us, *That the worlds were made by God*; yet it will not tell us, *That they were made by the Word of God.* Reaſon (as I have before hinted) will go a great way to perſwade, even an *Ariſtotelian*, that the World was not from *eternity*; but that it was made by a Divine omnipotent Being, pre-exiſtent to it: inſomuch that ſome of *Ariſtotle's* Diſciples in other things here deſerted him, and took themſelves ſo much concerned for their maſters Reputation, as to diſpute whether he ever meant it, yea or no. And the great Philoſopher himſelf, though he ſeemeth to have been fixed in his notion about the worlds Eternity in many places: yet in ſome particular paſſages of his writings, particularly in his Book *De Generatione*, ſeems to have wavered, diſputing which way God went to work in making of the world. And the fancies of the great Philoſophers ran very wild in this point: ſome will have it, that he firſt made a *Chaos*, or heap of confuſed matter; and out of that heap all particular things: as the Glaſs-man or Potter maketh his Veſſels; or the Brick-maker maketh his Brick and Tile: as if it had not been as eaſie by one work for God to have made out of nothing, all particular things, as to have made a *Chaos* out of nothing, that ſhould in it potentially contain all the ſpecies of particular Beings. Others would have that Heap or Maſs, call'd the *Chaos*, to have been eternal, out of which God produced all things: ſo it ſhould have been an improper Creation; not *ex nihilo materiæ*, from a nothing of pre-exiſtent matter; but *ex nihilo ſubjecti capacis*, from a nothing

of a ſubject capable to receive ſuch forms. But that God produced all things out of a meer nothing, or not-being of matter; and by the *word of his power* gave a being, not only to all particular forms of beings, but to all matter, and particular beings; ſaying, *Let there be light, and there was light: let there be a firmament, and it was ſo.* This is a thing Reaſon could never dream of, never from any connate principles conclude it. This faith tells us, the Word of God revealeth to us: Reaſon could never diſcern, never conclude: though it might conclude the thing, that the worlds were made by God; yet it could not conclude the *modus*, or manner of the thing, how God ſhould do it; or that he did it by the *word of his power*. This we could not by reaſon comprehend or underſtand.

3. *Reaſon giveth us a confuſed general notion, that the worlds were made by God: but faith giveth us a diſtinct account of particulars, the order, manner, and method of them.* Reaſon will tell us, the world could not be eternal, that it could not give an Original to it ſelf; that it muſt be produced by a more noble and excellent being. But now for the circumſtances of the Creation, the order, the time, the manner, that the world was created in ſix days; that light was firſt created, then the celeſtial bodies, and then the terreſtrial, *&c.* What was done the firſt day, what the ſecond, what the third, *&c.* Reaſon tells us not. Reaſon will tell us, that the firſt man was Gods Creation, for he could not be eternal; he could not give being to himſelf, he muſt be produced by a more excellent being: but that the *woman* ſhould be made of the *rib of man*, That man ſhould be made *according to the Image of God*; That he was made the ſixth day, after the reſt of Gods Works, and had a Dominion given him over them: This *Faith* learns us, *Reaſon* telleth us nothing of it.

4. Laſtly, Reaſon creates in the ſoul, at beſt, but a *faint aſſent* to this *Propoſition*, *That the worlds are made by God*, and ſtill leaveth the mind under incertain fluctuations and doubts about it. *By faith we underſtand*, ſaith the Text; we are not properly ſaid to underſtand thoſe things, of which we have only a general, confuſed, indiſtinct knowledg, and to which we only give an incertain languid aſſent. The great Philoſopher in the world (as you have heard) hath doubted, whether the world *were made at all*, or had an *eternal exiſtence*. Others, whether it had not its

its Original from a casual concourse of Atoms: infinitely vain have been unsanctified mens imaginations, as in other things, so concerning the Original of the world; and *optimus Philosophus* (we say) *non nascitur*. We are disputing still the most confessed conclusions, which are no more than the structures of Reason. So that indeed we are beholden to *Faith*, to the *Revelation of the word* (which is the object of Faith), and to the habits of *Grace* (*habits of faith*), for the settlement of our minds in Propositions of truth. It is but an auxiliary advantage as to Divine Propositions, which Reason gives us; our mind is not set at rest, and settled by them. A luxuriant wit and fancy maketh all the perswasion and confirmation of them from Reason very incertain. Faith only brings the Soul to a rest about them, and gives the soul a clear, distinct, certain notion, and understanding of them. By Reason we rather think, and opine, than understand, and certainly know, that the worlds were made by God. But this is enough for the Explication. I come to the Application of the Doctrine.

This in the first place may help to confirm our Faith concerning the *Divine Being*, the *Unity of it*, and the *Trinity of persons in it*: the worlds were *made by God*: Then there must be a God, whose being was pre-existent to the world; and this God must be infinite in Power, and in Wisdom. The producing of things out of a *not-being* into a *being*, required an infinite power: the producing of such a variety of Beings, many of which were furnished, and adorned with such excellent perfections and qualities; the kniting and joynting of all together, and putting them in such an excellent subjection, and subordination each to other, required an infinite wisdom, a wisdom paramount to any created wisdom; yea above all the wisdom of the Creatures, had all their wisdoms been united. This being infinite in Power, and Wisdom, must be God: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*, Gen. 1. 1. *God alone spread out the heavens*, Job 9. 8. *He made the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and all that therein is.* Yea, thus the Lord proveth himself to be God, *I am the Lord, and there is none other*; *forming the light, and making the darkness*, vers. 7. And thus the true and living God standeth distinguished from *Idols*, Jer. 10. 11. *The Gods that have not made the heavens and the* *Use* 1.

earth: even they ſhall periſh from the earth, and from under theſe heavens: He hath made the earth by his power, he hath eſtabliſhed the world by his wiſdom, and hath ſtretched out the heavens by his diſcretion. Thus the Apoſtle argues, *Heb.* 3. 4. *Every houſe is builded by ſome: but he that made all things is God*; yea, and this *God is one.* The uniformity of this great ſtructure, the beauty, and order, and ſubordination of all things in it do abundantly prove this by Reaſon. But *Faith* yet more confirmeth it, *Mal.* 2. 10. *Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?* Indeed (as I before ſaid,) the ſtructure and fabrick of it ſheweth that one will willed it, one wiſdom contrived and directed it, and that one hand framed it. And this *one God is three perſons, the Father of whom are all things,* 1 Cor. 8. 6. *The Son,* by whom are all things; *for without him was nothing made that is made,* Joh. 1. 3. *By him he made the worlds,* Heb. 1. 3. *The Holy Spirit, that moved at the firſt upon the face of the waters,* Gen. 1. 1. *Thou ſendeſt forth thy ſpirit, and they were created,* Pſal. 104. 30. Job 33. 4. *The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life,* ברא אלהים. In the *Hebrew,* Gods created. I think it is well ſaid of a grave Author, *Conſtans aliqua & certa ratio pluralis numeri de Deo uſurpati reddi alia nequit quam perſonarum pluralitas.* There can be no other ſteady certain reaſon given, why the Hebrew word ſo ordinarily tranſlated *God,* ſhould be in the plural number, but to notifie to us the *plurality of perſons* in the *Divine Being:* all three are but that *one God, who made heaven and the earth.* The School-men determine right, that there is an infinite ſpace from *nothing* to *ſomething*; and therefore nothing but the infinite power of an infinite God, could bring any thing out of a *not-being* into a *being.*

Uſe 2. From hence *we may eaſily conclude what a God we ſerve:* we ſerve him that *made heaven and earth,* and conſequently one, who is, 1. *Infinite in power.* 2. *Excellent in wiſdom.* 3. *Admirable in goodneſs and mercy.* 1. *Infinite in Power* and Greatneſs. To produce the leaſt thing, and bring it out of a *not-being into being* (as I argued before), ſpeaketh an *unmeaſurable infinite power:* What power doth it then require, to produce all the various kinds and ſpecies of Creatures, the great bodies of the Heavens and the Earth; and all thoſe great bodies in them

them both, out of a meer nothing, and not-being, into an existence and being? *Ex magnitudine creaturarum Deus magnus intelligitur*, &c. From the greatneſs of the Creatures, ſaith *Auguſtine*, we may underſtand the greatneſs of God: What an infinite and immenſe God do we ſerve? What nothings of being, and of power muſt we be compared with him? *All the nations of the earth are to him as the drop of a bucket, as the ſmall duſt of the ballance.* 2. *Excellent in wiſdom.* The contrivance of the fabrick and ſtructure of the world ſpeaketh this: But what an abundance of wiſdom hath the great Creator ſcattered up and down the Creation? What a natural ſagacity is, not in man only, but in many brute Creatures? What abundance of moral prudence and diſcretion is obſerved, and to be found in many earthly Princes? Their Miniſters of State and Counſellers, and in others of an inferior order? What infinite wiſdom appears in joynting the world, and making the ſeveral parts of it to fit, and to ſerve one another, and to compound the different qualities of creatures to the ſervice each of other, and of the Univerſe? Oh the infinite wiſdom of the only wiſe God! yet how little do we ſee of it? 3. Yea, and his infinite goodneſs alſo is apparent in the Creation of all things. Whoſo looketh upon the uſefulneſs of the Creatures to each other; their joynt ſubſerviency to their end, and particularly their uſefulneſs and ſubſerviency to man, who hath by the Law of Creation a Dominion and Rule over all; muſt cry out, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord? who is like unto thee, glorious in holineſs, fearful in praiſes, working wonders?*

We may from hence obſerve *the vanity of thoſe Philoſophers of this world*, who would either make the world, as fitted and joynted together, to be eternal, and without a beginning; or at leaſt ſome *Chaos*, or heap of confuſed matter to have been ſo: as alſo of thoſe, who as to the Creation of the world, will have God at firſt to have made ſuch a confuſed *Chaos* or *Maſs*, and then out of that to have made all things. The Potter indeed muſt have ſuch an heap of Clay, before he can make his Pots of ſeveral ſizes and faſhions; but if he were to create this Clay, certainly he would go the furtheſt way about; for by the ſame power that he muſt firſt have to give being to his Clay, he might make his ſeveral ſorts and ſizes of Veſſels, and ſave himſelf that *Uſe* 3.

double labour. I conclude, by *Faith* we understand *that the worlds* were made by the Power, *or by the Word of God.* His Power was the efficient cause of it; his Goodness the final cause of its Creation; his Wisdom the exemplary cause.

Use 4. 4. *We may from hence learn, the usefulness, necessity and excellency of faith:* Faith taken for the object of it, *Faith* taken for the habit and act of it. The Word of God, the habit of Faith, the exercise of it, they are all useful. We have great magnifyings of Reason, and indeed Reason is a noble faculty: it is that to the soul, which the eye is to the body, which light is to the eye; but Faith is not useless, because Reason is useful; yea Reason must ride but in the second Chariot: Reason would have taught us little of Spirits, indeed we *by Faith* know little of them; but we know so much as God will please to reveal; we had known much less, if left only to what conclusions we could have raised from natural principles. Reason would have taught us nothing in particular, how, and in what order, or in what time the world was made. Nay, 2*ly*, There is not an use of Faith only, but a *necessity of it.* The Creation of the world is an object of our Faith, and to be received upon the credit of the Word of God; we must so assent to it, as by our assent to give an homage to Gods Authority in revealing it: this we cannot do but by Faith. Finally, from this discourse appeareth the *Excellency of Faith*; it maketh us to *understand*, that the worlds were framed by the Word of God; it puts our mind beyond doubts, and endless disputes, and incertain fluctuations; it leaveth us not to the endless inquiries of Philosophy, how these things could be, *&c.*

Use 5. Lastly, Learn hence *how every inanimate and brute creature praiseth God*, and how infinitely all *rational* creatures are obliged to the *service and obedience of God.* 1. How every inanimate and brute creature praiseth God: *The heavens* (saith the Psalmist) *declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work: Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night declareth knowledg: there is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard: their line is gone out to the end of the earth, and their words to the end of the world: In them hath he set a tabernacle for the Sun,* &c. Psal. 19. 1, 2, 3, 4. There is no

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Creature but giveth a mute praiſe to God, they ſhew the Lords Glory, and praiſe him; as the picture finely drawn doth praiſe the Limner, or the building praiſeth the Maſon or Carpenter; as any great effect praiſeth its efficient cauſe. And this is a thing we ought to attend, and obſerve in our Contemplation and uſe of the Creatures; we ſhould view God in them: ſee how God is glorified in their brave and uſeful ſtructure and compoſition; Oh how ſweet a Contemplation would this be, if we could view the Glory, Power, Wiſdom, infinite Goodneſs of the Creator in them all! But ſecondly, How particularly is man concerned, to praiſe, love, and ſerve God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth! to man he hath alone given Reaſon to make concluſions; to man hath he given the word of Faith; for man he hath made all theſe things, and given him a Dominion over the work of his hands. Now *who planteth a vineyard* (ſaith the Apoſtle), 1 *Cor.* 9. 7. *and eateth not of the fruit thereof*? The world is a great Vineyard, God hath planted it, he hath let it out to the Sons of men as his husband-men; *Should he not eat of the fruit thereof?* The inanimate Creatures, they *declare the glory of God:* the Heavens declare his Glory, the Earth ſheweth his handy-work, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, carry the high Praiſes and Glory of God to the utmoſt ends of the Earth. Do not you that are Fathers think your Sons obliged to ſerve, and to honour you? Yet you were but partial cauſes of their being; God did much more than you to their production. Doth not the Maſter think his ſervant is obliged to ſerve, and to honour him, becauſe he hath made him, he hath raiſed him up to ſome capacity of living in the world, to ſome dignity? The Potter thinketh that he may command the Pots which he hath made, and ſhall not man be the ſervant of the moſt high God, who made him, and who made the world for him?

1. In Reaſon he ought to be ſo, he oweth his being, his well-being, all that he hath, all the accommodations of his life unto God.

2. God expecteth it from him. *Nulla neceſſitate coactus*, (ſaith Holy *Auguſtine*) *nulla ſua cujuſdam utilitatis indigentia permotus, ſed ſola bonitate ac liberrima voluntate fecit Deus quicquid fecit.* God was not compelled to make the world, he needed

needed it not, he made it meerly of his own goodneſs, and for the uſe of man. Can any one think that God doth not expect homage and ſervice from man? And from hence three things muſt follow,

1. That the preſumptuous ſinner muſt neceſſarily be *the moſt unnatural creature*; he ſerveth not the end of his Creation. The graſs was made for the food of the beaſt, that ſerveth its end, it grows, is cut down, *&c.* The beaſts ſerve their end, they were made for the uſe of man, for his food, his covering; they dye daily, are clipped, ſhorn, flea'd, and all for man, only the ſinner ſerveth not his end. He was made for the Honour and Glory of God, he doth nothing leſs; yea his whole life is a diſhonouring God, an abuſing of his holy name and things.

2. That this ſinner is the moſt *ingrateful creature in the world:* he acts from his will and choice, with the uſe of Reaſon. Now doing ſo, conſidering that not only he is born in the Lords houſe, and is his Creation; but all the Creatures upon which he lives, by the uſe of which his life is made ſweet to him, are the Lords, his *Wheat*, his *Oyl*, his *Wool*, *Silk*, *Flax*, &c. This ſpeaketh him the moſt ingrateful creature in the whole Creation.

3. Nay laſtly, It ſpeaks him *the moſt ſelf-condemned creature.* If he would but ask his own conſcience, *whoſe image and ſuperſcription he bears*, it would certainly reply unto him, *God's*: then certainly that of our Saviour would follow, *Render therefore unto God, the things that are Gods*; and in not doing ſo, he cannot but be condemned by his own Conſcience, whenever he will give it liberty to ſpeak freely to him.

SERMON

SERMON III.

Pſal. XXXVI. 6.

——O Lord! thou preſerveſt man and beaſt.

I Am now come to the Theme which I at firſt intended, *viz.* a diſcourſe concerning *Divine Providence*; to which my two former were, indeed, but preliminary and introductory diſcourſes. I ſhall not ſpeak to *Divine Providence* in that latitude in which ſometimes Divines take it, as it comprehendeth the *Preſcience of God*; but ſhall reſtrain my diſcourſe to what Divines call *Actual Providence:* by which I underſtand *the workings of God referring to the world as created.* We have already ſhewed, 1. That there *was an eternal purpoſe of God, according to the counſel of his will, concerning all things.* 2. That in purſuit of this, he firſt *made the worlds, all creatures both in heaven and earth.* Now the queſtion is, Whether God, when he had made the *worlds*, left them to their own order and government, either ſubjecting them to a *mathematical fate*, or leaving them to their own inclinations, no further *caring for them:* or Whether he doth not exerciſe a daily care concerning them, in the preſervation of their beings, qualities, and faculties; and directing and governing their motions and actions: we affirm the latter, *viz.* That as all things were made at firſt, *per eſſentiam creatricem*, by the creating power of the Divine Being, producing them out of a Not-being into a Being; ſo they are kept in Being and Order, *per ejuſdem potentiam conſervatricem*, by the ſame power, *preſerving*, *upholding* and *governing* of them. This is a very large *Theme*, ſhould I undertake it in the full extent and compaſs of it; but I ſhall reduce whatſoever I ſhall ſay concerning it to theſe Heads.

1. I ſhall ſpeak ſomething concerning the *Nature* and *Principal*

acts of Providence, as more generally respecting creatures. I shall therefore first prove the thing, That there is such an act of God; and then discourse of the two main acts of it.

2. In regard the *motions of Providence* are not all equal, I shall discourse something *concerning the specialties of it.*

3. I shall shortly discourse of the *depths*, and *unsearchable things* of it.

4. Something I shall also speak (more largely) of *our duty to observe it:* and some more special observable things in the motions of it.

5. Lastly, I shall speak something fully concerning the δυσνόητα, or hard Chapters of it. For what St. *Peter*, 1 *Pet.* 3. 16, saith concerning *Paul's Epistles*, the same may be applied to the workings of Divine Providence. *There are in them some things hard to be understood, which they who are unlearned, and unstable, wrest, as they do other things, to their own destruction.* The profane and carnal hearts of men wrest them to their ruin: the jealous and suspicious Christian to his own disquiet. My work will then be, to answer some hard questions, solve some *Phænomena's*, expound some hard Chapters; so as to reconcile the motions of Providence to the *eternal purpose*, the *faithful promises*, and the *unchangeable loving-kindness of God to his church and people.* This shall be the method of my discourse. First, Let me open the term, and then establish the thing, *That there is a providence.* The word, *Providence*, is derived from the Latine; and indeed strictly according to the Notation of the word, signifies no more than a foresight of a thing that is to come; in which notion *Tully* describes it.

Per quam futurum aliquid videtur, antequam eveniat, Cicero de Invent.

This it may be gave some Divines advantage to extend the Notion of it to the *Divine Prescience*. But this Notation is too short to express the Notion of *Providence* as an act of God, and indeed the Notation of it, both in the *Hebrew* and *Greek*, signifies more than this. In the first a *curious subtil search and care*; in the second more than a bare sight; such a one as *is conjoined with care and minding the thing seen.*

Indeed we do not find the Noun *Providence* attributed to God in Scripture: we find *Tertullus*, the *Roman Orator*, telling the Governour, *That by his Providence many worthy things had been done for the Jewish Nation*, Act. 24. 2. But I do not remember the term *Providence* of God, applied to God any-where. But we

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are not disputing for a *word*: the thing we find *up and down*. *Can God provide flesh for his people*, Psal. 78. v. 20. *God having provided better things for us*, προβλεψαμένου, Heb. 11. 20. Job 38. 41, *Who provideth for the Raven his food, when his young ones cry unto God.* Our Saviour, *Matt.* 6. argueth from this act of God towards the Birds and the Lillies, to dissuade his Disciples from a too eager sollicitude for the things of this life. There again is the thing plain enough, though not the word *Providence*.

I hinted to you before, that some Divines use the term sometimes in a far larger notion than I am speaking to it, as comprehensive of something of the *Divine Decrees*, relating to all but rational beings: hence their distinction betwixt the *Decree of Predestination, and the Decree of Providence.* The latter they make *the purpose of God to create the world, and to preserve and govern it being created*; and thus they make Creation a branch of Providence, (it was indeed a working according to the Counsel of the Divine Will). But I meddle not with the *Decree*, but shall limit my discourse to the work of *Providence*, which I told you was *Actual Providence*.

In short, the term, *Providence*, in the Notion wherein I shall speak to it, signifies, *The daily influence of the Divine Being upon the whole Creation, preserving and upholding the several Beings and faculties of all the creatures, permitting, directing and governing their several motions and actions to the great end of his own glory, and other ends of their creation subordinated to this end.* So I understand by it the *work of God*, which (as our Lord saith) *he hitherto worketh, and his son worketh*, contradistinct to the work of *creation*. Creation was his work in the beginning of time: this his work in the process of time, beginning when Creation ceased. That was the work of six days; this his work ever since: That gave the creature its Being; this upholdeth and continueth that Being: both the works of an Almighty power, of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy-Ghost*. For the works of the Trinity, with reference to the creature, are not divided: what is the work of the Father, is also the work of the Son, and the work of the Holy-Ghost. So that when we assert a Divine Providence, extensive to the whole Creation, this is that which we mean.

That as the blessed Trinity did at first by an Almighty power,

bring the worlds, both Heaven and Earth, and all creatures therein, out of a Not-being, into a Being; so he doth still, wisely and powerfully influence the whole creation, preserving their Beings, and several faculties of all his creatures; and so far directeth, permitteth, and governeth their actions, that they shall answer the ends, for which he created, and so qualified them, especially the great end of his glory. For (saith *Solomon*) *he made all things for himself*; and *for him*, as well as *of him*, are *all things* (saith the Apostle). The *School-men* say, that Gods Being, is *esse fixum*, a fixt and unalterable Being, in which there can be *no variableness, no shadow of change*: his name is, *I AM*, he is the same *yesterday, to day, and for ever*. But the creatures Being, is *esse fluxum*, a mutable Being; we see changes and varieties every day, in their Beings, in their Motions: the whole creation is but one *great Sea*, in a *continual flux* and *reflux*. Now, as God by his *Decree of Providence* from eternity, determined these successions, varieties and motions; so like a great King, *mighty in Counsel*, and *wonderful in working*, he upholdeth them to them, and he governeth them in their effects. So that, as the former Doctrine of creation excluded the *Pagan conceits*, either of the worlds eternity, or casual composition of it, and gave God the glory of that his first and great work of *creation*: so this is opposed to the Atheistical conceits of those, who would have the created world, to be either a principle to it self, of its standing or preservation in the order it is; or as a great *Machine* or *Engine* moving from some great wheels that move all the rest, (which is said to be the Peripatetick Doctrine, and much suits our Judicial Astrologers), or moving from any other first principle than the *will, command*, or influence of God. This is a great point, giving God *the glory of His*, and *his Sons* hitherto *working*.

We live in a generation when *Atheism* aboundeth, otherwise it were needless to establish so great a principle. *Aristotle* thought he deserved to be answered with a *Gallows* that denied it. Suffer me a little to confirm your faith in it, by arguing it, 1. *From the Creation.* 2. *From the Nature of the Divine Being.* 3. *From the effects which are our daily objects of sense in the World.* 4. *From the more sure word of Prophesie.*

1. That

1. That the *worlds* were first made by God, *I before shewed you:* Our eyes are continually exercised in the view of a vast Theater (and 'tis but a little of it that we behold). The Heavens (that are visible to us) are replenished with great and vast bodies, the Sun, Moon, and Stars; in the Heavens are great Clouds, containing vast quantities of water: The Earth is full of multitudes of species, infinite individuals of all sorts; all indued with a variety of contrary faculties, and qualities; so are the wide Seas. The Earth hangs in the midst of the air. These things have lasted some thousands of years. The inanimate creatures still keep their Stations. The Sun is not wearied, nor worn out in its course, though it runs it with a strange swiftness every day. The Moon is where, and as it was; the fixed Stars keep their abodes, and the wandring Stars, yet go not out of their road. The Earth drops not down under us, nor doth the Sea invade the Earth; not a species of creatures is lost, from the first Creation. Individuals indeed perish, but as *one generation goeth, another comes:* the species in competent numbers is preserved. The creatures move and work in a subordination to the good each of others; the production and being of no creature, antedates the being or production of another upon which it lives. Those that renew their lives with the year, have their table spread before they appear. The silk-worms egg quickens not, but in proportion to the budding of the Mulberry. Each creature knows its season, when to fly from colder Countreys, in which it could not endure the winter, into what is warmer. Creatures have a care provided for them, while they are not able to provide for themselves; which then, as naturally leaveth them, as it before wrought for them: The Bee and Ant provide for the winter: in short, a thousand such instincts and inclinations might be insisted on. Countreys that have most poysons, have most antidotes; few Countreys have sufficiency for themselves, but must be beholden to their neighbours. Take any one body, but especially that of *Man* (who is a little world in himself); study but your selves, and consider how many Vessels, how many limbs and instruments must daily be kept clean and entire: How many humours, joynts, and members, must be kept in order to keep you alive, and in any degree of health and capacity to the operations of humane life. I would now fain know whence all this is: Will any ascribe all this to a *fate*,

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or order at first set? Suppose any would say so, he must needs conceive an omnipotent Divine Being, at first setting the joynts of the world in such an order; and surely it were as easie for him to suppose the same being upholding and preserving them in order; yea, and in acknowledging the former, he must be forced to acknowledg the latter. We see a skilful workman making a Clock or Watch, consisting of many wheels, and little instruments, that shall have and keep their several motions 24, 48, hours; suppose it were two or three months, suppose it were so many years; yet we see at last it must not only be wound up, but by daily motion the wheels, and other parts (though made of hardest mettals) decay: How is it, that in so many thousand years the Sun, Moon, and Stars are not worn, nor abated in their light? That by the daily motions of mans body, his instruments of motion are not sooner worn out? (his bones are not of Brass, nor his sinews of Iron); if they were, less than seventy years would wear them out. Will any say things are not under a fate, but are left to move at their pleasure? We know there are multitudes of natural Agents, that move not upon election or counsel, but naturally and necessarily; how come these influenced? For those that do move from Counsel, and have a *Will* to guide them: Let but any consider what a confusion would presently be by the wayward actions of Children and Servants in his own house, if they had nothing but their own wills to guide and govern them: What an heap of confusions every City or Town would make, if all inhabitants were left to their own wills and government; and he will easily conceive what a place of ataxy, mischief and disorder the world would be, if God did not daily work and rule in the midst thereof. The infinite variety, with the different qualities of created Beings, yet all conspiring together for the good and order of the whole; the order we see amongst them; their subserviencies and subordinations each to other; they all speak that there is a God, that by his Providence ruleth the world. Whoso lifteth up his eyes to the Heavens, and considereth the constant unwearied motions of those great celestial bodies, with the evenness of them; so as they are reducible to a science of all other most certain, liable to little more exceptions, than an extraordinary command to the Sun to stand still in *Gibeon*, and *the Moon* in the *valley of Ajalon*, or to go backward some few degrees, as in *Hezekiah's* time; or considereth

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the vaſt bodies of water ſometime in the Heavens, coming upon us, not as water from a pail, but through a water-pot; muſt needs conclude a Superiour hand, directing and guiding the motions, and holding the thin Cloud that it is not rent; while the rain makes its orderly paſſage by drops through the thin and ſubtil parts of it. Whoſo ſtandeth by the Sea-ſide, and obſerveth that vaſt body of water, driven by fierce winds ſometimes, and conſtantly by its natural motion invading the Earth, as if it would preſently ſwallow it up; and obſerveth it after the ceaſing of the wind, or a ſix hours progreſſive motion, gradually retreating, and leaving it out of fear, yea, and further leaving a water-mark for the following flow, unleſs at ſome certain times, before and after the full of the Moon, muſt needs acknowledg a Supreme Being, ſetting bounds unto it, which it hath no reaſon to preſcribe to it ſelf; nor is it ſubject to the Command of the greateſt Potentate on Earth. Finally, he that ſtandeth upon the Earth, and conſiders its annual productions; the variety of Creatures, of all orders in it, their Sympathies, and Antipathies; their Succeſſions, the varieties of their Beings, Motions, and Qualities; and yet their mutual ſubſerviencies to one another, and ſubjection to each other; muſt be no leſs than a moſt abſurd and bruitiſh Atheiſt, if he will not acknowledg, that no leſs than the daily and mighty influence of an Almighty God could compound their living together upon the ſame ſoil, in any harmonious agreement each with other. That every thing ſhould know its ſeaſons, and keep its bounds, and be in ſubjection to man, weaker than many of them; and not tranſgreſs its order or end (but when armed by God as a part of his Hoſt to revenge his quarrels upon ſinners), muſt be from a knowledg which God gives them, and a Law he daily puts upon them; but as the Pſalmiſt ſaith, *Pſal.* 107. 23. *They that go down to the Sea in Ships, that do buſineſs in great waters: theſe ſee the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep: For he commandeth, and raiſeth the ſtormy winds, which lift up the waves thereof: they mount up to the heavens, they go down to the depths: their ſoul is melted, becauſe of trouble:* the breaking of a wave would ſwallow them up. Who is he that maintaineth the continuity of the parts of the water that the waves break not, nor the water divideth under the mighty weight that is upon it? who but the mighty God could do it? In ſhort, he ſeemeth to have taken a very curſory, ſlight, and overly view of the Works of Creation, that doth not ſee a plain neceſſity of

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a Divine Providence, to uphold the various Beings within the compass of it, and their various Qualities; to compound the disagreements of their natures, into an harmony proportioned to the preservation of the Universe. *Whoso is wise, and hath observed these things*, he must understand both the Power and Wisdom of God in all these things, and consequently the loving-kindness of the Lord. I shall shut up this with that Pious foot of the Psalmists Song of Providence, *Psal.* 107. *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men!*

2. If we consider the *Nature of God*, we shall find that he *who acknowledgeth a Divine Being, and denieth a providential care of all created Beings, hath but set up an idol in his heart, and rather owneth a God with his tongue, than in any truth and sincerity.* For what do we mean by that term *God*, but *an immense Being filling all places, a first cause of all things; Almighty in power, of infinite activity, wisdom, and goodness?* We can hardly so much as fancy such a Being, but by the same conception, we must establish a Divine Providence.

1. If we allow not God to be the *first Cause*, we must grant a former cause of things; and this were to deny God, while we pretend to own him. It is as much *nonsense* to assert one before the first, as one higher than the highest. But how is God the first cause, if he hath no influence upon second causes, nor they any dependance upon him? If they say that second causes have a dependance on him, and he an influence on them; they establish what we contend for, *viz.* a Divine Providence.

2. If we allow God to be an *immense and infinite being, filling all places:* we must either allow him to fill all places *as an oculate active being*, or as a *senseless inanimate being*. A bulk of lead or stone filleth a place, but takes no notice of any thing in it: A man filleth a place which circumscribeth him, but seeth and observeth all things. It were an high blasphemy against God to affirm, that he filleth all places, only as a Log, or a bulk of Lead filleth a particular place: if he filleth all places as an animate being, that hath eyes and ears, he must needs *see* and *hear*, and observe all things in all places which his Being filleth. Whoso granteth this, doth in a great measure own and acknowledg a Divine Providence.

3. But this Doctrine is fully confirmed to us, if we will but re-

recognize God a being of *infinite mercy and goodneſs*. God is not like the Oſtrich, of which *Job* ſaith, 39. 14. *She leaves her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the duſt: and forgetteth that the foot may cruſh them, or the wild beaſt may break them: ſhe is hardned againſt her young ones.* It is our great vanity, that labouring under a difficulty to conceive of any being above our own pitiful perfection and capacity, we fancy to our ſelves ſtrange *Idea's* of God. We can hardly apprehend an immenſe being that ſhould fill all places: if we could, we ſhould eaſily conclude a Divine Omniſcience. If we can fancy any thing of that, yet we are ready to conceive of him according to the lazy imperfections of our natures; and think of God, as of ſome great and mighty Prince, that hath either through inactivity, or for greater ſtate, mewed up himſelf in his Court, and gives up himſelf, inſtead of his buſineſs of Government, to divertiſements of pleaſure, leaving the care of Government upon his Counſellors, or ſome principal Miniſters of State. Hence the miſtake of the old Philoſophers, of Gods Providence extending not to all, but to ſome particular Beings, obſerved to have a great influence upon ſublunary Beings. And our Judicial Aſtrologers ſeem to inherit, though not their wiſdom in all other natural things; yet their error in this: *Aſtra regunt homines, ſed regit aſtra Deus* (is their Song). But alas! this is but to ſet up an Idol in our hearts. And indeed, if we could conceive any earthly Prince to be preſent in every place, we could hardly imagine him ſo neglective of his Government. What Prince will not rule all motions and actions which he ſeeth and heareth, to what he apprehendeth the wiſeſt and beſt ends for his own honour? So that if we could ſuppoſe an earthly Prince in all places, where he hath Children, Servants, or Subjects, and to have his ſenſes open, to ſee and hear them, he would certainly contribute his beſt help to preſerve and govern them. Eſpecially if he be a perſon of ordinary humanity, and goodneſs, and hath a ſufficiency of Power and Wiſdom. Do not we ſee how naturally the *parent*, to his finite capacity, careth for, preſerveth, and governeth the Child? How the Maſter of a Family cannot neglect a care for, and government of his Family, till he hath debauched himſelf to a beaſt? Nay, do not the birds of the air, and beaſts of the field naturally care for their young ſeed, and govern them? Whence had they their natural propenſions and inclinations to this goodneſs towards thoſe, to whom

they have ſtood in any order of cauſation? Was it not from the great Creator, who thus diſpoſed them? If it be a piece of goodneſs in the creature ſo to care for, preſerve and govern its fellow-creature; certainly we muſt allow it to be ſo in God. What goodneſs of this nature there is in the creature, floweth from him, as the ſtream from the fountain: And is certainly much more in him, he having loſt nothing by the Communication of the Creatures ſhares to them. So that whoſoever will acknowledg a Being that is infinitely good, muſt alſo acknowledg that Being infinitely provident for the Creatures that derive from him: and every creature thus deriving, God who wanteth neither Power nor Activity, muſt as naturally care for them all, as a Father or Mother careth for every Child, and a bird for every young one. And it is nothing but ſome mens Atheiſtical conceptions, and others more imperfect notions of God, not conſidering the Divine Being in the extent of his *Immenſity*, *Activity*, *Power*, and *Goodneſs*, which maketh any ſo much as in the leaſt to heſitate, as to the Doctrine of Divine Providence.

3. Let us once more turn our eyes *to the ſtrange effects and events* which we ſee in the world: of which we ſee great variety, and many of them which appear to us of great moment and conſequence. Now ſuppoſing that there were not a Divine Providence directing and governing them, and being the firſt cauſe to them, they muſt either be the products of ſo many *Machines* or *Engines*, moving neceſſarily; or of the *imperate acts of ſome creatures endued with wiſdom and counſel.* We ſhall find the effects in the world ſuch as are impoſſible to be products of any ſuch nature.

1. *Were they the products of the firſt, Man might have a previous knowledg of, and not at any time be ſurpriſed by them.*

2. *Were they meerly the products of the ſecond, God himſelf could hardly be conceived, to have a previous certain knowledg of them, ſo as by his Prophets to give the world a warning.*

1. I ſay firſt, Were the effects we ſee in the world neceſſary, depending upon a certain fate, and moving in a certain order; What then hindereth, but man might have a *certain previous knowledg* of them things which work neceſſarily, work certainly, and evenly? Thus indeed the *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars*, and all natural agents move: Every Almanackmaker therefore will tell you how

many

many hours the Sun will ſhine in a day, ſix, twelve months hence; when the Eclipſes ſhall be of either Luminary, and to what degrees they ſhall be obſcured. But can they alſo tell us when the next great Plague, the next Innundation, or Fire we ſhall hear of ſhall be? or when, and where ſhall be the next great mutation in an Empire, or a Kingdom? We ſee men (ſometimes) infinitely ſurpriſed in the product of ſecond cauſes, ſo contrary to their expectation, and to what appeared to us would have been their probable effect. If things had moved by a Law of Fate, the world is now ſo old, that the courſe of its motions would have been matter of ſcience and demonſtration to us; but alas there is nothing leſs. Who can tell *what to morrow will bring forth*? not only as to his own particular concerns, but the far greater, and more general concerns and intereſts of mankind, and the Church of God in particular.

2. How then are they *produced*? Is it from the *will of man*? I ask whether from *the wills of men working neceſſarily*, as the firſt and only principle of them; or working freely, and at perfect liberty; the firſt ſurely none will aſſert that conſiders what he ſaith. If from the wills of men working freely, then they might alſo work and move otherwiſe than they do. Then I ſay it is hard to conceive, how God himſelf ſhould have a *certain knowledg of things, previous* to the *event* or *effect*; for there was no certainty of ſuch an event or effect. But that God hath ſuch a certain previous fore-knowledg, is evident from all the Prophecies, where by his Prophets, he foretold things that were to come to paſs many hundreds of years after; and that with all their circumſtances. The great effects of created Beings muſt have ſome cauſe, I mean ſome firſt cauſe: If this were Nature, or Fate, *i. e.* a neceſſary law impoſed upon them; their motions would be even, uniform, ſubjected to our art and fore-knowledg, which they are not. If the firſt cauſe of them be the wills of men, working upon choice, there could then have been no certainty of them before they had exiſted; for they might as well not have been, as have been. If any ſay, but though the wills of men move freely, yet he who calleth the things that are not, as if they were; he knew which way things ſhould be, and how the wills of men would move. This we moſt freely grant, but we alſo ſay, That he knew them, becauſe he willed either to effect, or to permit them; and that ſuppoſing this Decree of Providence, there muſt alſo be a work-

ing of it, upholding created Beings, conducting their effects, and many times over-ruling them: and this is that which we call *Providence*.

4. In a further evidence of this, I might call in a plentiful Testimony, from the most learned and wise amongst the Heathens. But I shall not much trouble my self or you with that discourse; but refer those that desire to be satisfied herein, to the excellent discourse of *Du-Plessis* Lord of *Morney*, in his Book of the *Trueness of Christian Religion*, Chap. 13. where he sheweth Providence abundantly owned by *Plato*, *Plotinus*, *Hierocles*, *Aristotle*, *Cicero*, *Seneca*, and others. I shall therefore only add one passage of *Seneca* (not I think particularly by him mentioned); it is in his Book of *Natural Questions*, Chap. 45. where he calleth God, "The keeper and governour of the "whole world: a Mind, a Spirit, the "Lord, and Artificer [or Creator] of "all the world, he to whom every "name agreeth. Will you call him *Fate*? "you will not be out. For he it is on "whom all things depend. Will you "call him *Providence*? you will say "right; for by his Counsel the world "is provided, and taken care for that it remains steady, and "performeth its operations.

Custodem, rectoremque universi, animum & spiritum, mundani hujus operis Dominum & artificem, cui nomen omne convenit. Vis illum fatum vocare? non errabis. Hic est, ex quo suspensa sunt omnia, causa causarum. Vis illum Providentiam dicere? rectè dices. Est enim cujus consilio huic mundo providetur, ut inconcussus eat, & actus suos explicet, Seneca Nat. Qu. l. 2. cap. 45.

Salvian upon this Argument tells us, that the Heathens acknowledged God to be in the world, as the Master of a great Ship is in that, abiding always in it, and stirring up and down: Whence he cryeth out, "What could they more religiously judg and "speak of God, than to compare him to the Governour of a "Ship, who is never in the Ship idle, but continually at work either in one kind or another? The *Pythagoreans* compared God to the Soul in the body, filling each part, and actuating each part of the body. The *Platonists* call him *the moderator of all things*. The Heathen Poets speak as well and fully. *Virgil* telleth us, God is continually moving throughout all the Earth, *Tractusq; maris, cœlumq; profundum*, and the Waters and the Heavens. In short, none but some of the most sensual and brutish *Epicureans*, ever so much as called this in question.

Quid potuerunt de affectu, & diligentiâ Dei religiosius sentire? Salvian, l. 1.

5. But hitherto I have been arguing this point with you *as men*, to convince you of it if you were Heathens, and had no know-

knowledg of the Holy Scripture. When I consider you in that notion, I must say to you, as the Apostle speaks in another case, *We have a more sure word of prophecy.* As we by faith understand that the worlds were at first made by God: so by faith also we plentifully understand, that the *created worlds* are *upheld, preserved, protected,* and *governed* by God. I shall hereafter more distinctly prove this in my following discourse, when I shall come to speak of the distinct and particular acts and objects of this *Divine Providence.* I shall only here make use of a few, instead of very many Scriptures which might be produced, *Heb.* 1. 3. φέρων τε τὰ πάντα. *Upholding all things by the word of his power.* He at first made all things by the word of his Power, and he *upholdeth* all things by the word of his Power. My Text saith, *He preserveth both man and beast.* Our Lord telleth us, that he *cloatheth the grass of the field, and feedeth the Ravens,* Matth. 6. The *Psalmist* tells us, that *his kingdom ruleth over all.* And again, *Matth.* 10. 29, 30. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? yet not one of them falls to the ground without the will of your heavenly father.* Acts 17. 28. *In him we live, move, and have our being.* Prov. 15. 13. *The eyes of the Lord are in all places, beholding the evil and the good.* John 5. 17. *My father worketh hitherto, and I work.* In short, the places of Scripture confirming this Doctrine of Divine Providence, are very many; and will most of them fall under some part or other of my ensuing discourse, referring to the particular objects and acts of Divine Providence. And I therefore shall not in this place further enlarge upon them, but come next to consider the extent, or particular objects of Divine Providence. I proceed therefore to a second Question.

Quest. 2. *What are the objects of Divine Providence? or how far doth the Divine care extend?*

Though the *Epicureans* of old would acknowledg no *Providence,* and many of the *Stoicks* asserting a *Fate,* destroyed it; yet the wiser *Peripateticks* would grant it, though but a limited one, extended to some particular Beings and things; and too many amongst those who are called Christians, seem to inherit something of their spirit. I remember that when *Pharaoh* saw *Egypt* almost destroyed, he calls for *Moses* and *Aaron,* and bids them *go and serve the Lord:* but adds, *Exod.* 10. 8, *But who are they*

that

that ſhall go? When *Moſes* replyed, *We will go with our young, and with our old, with our ſons, and with our daughters, with our flocks, and with our herds will we go.* He replyeth *verſ.* 10. *Let the Lord ſo deal with me, as I let you go and your little ones.* Thus many deal with God. When they conſider the vaſt bodies of the Creatures, the great varieties of their beings, and qualities, their motions, *&c.* they are forced to acknowledg a Divine Providence; That the world could not ſtand, nor the parts of it hold together, unleſs a Superior hand ruled, upheld, and governed them: They therefore will acknowledg a Providence, as to the great bodies of the Heavens, *&c.* But ſay they, *How far will you extend it?* When they hear us aſſert it as to all things, the ſound of the *little ones* in nature, troubles them, yea, and as to the *wills of men*, they are wonderfully diſturbed. We muſt therefore enquire what the Scripture ſaith, which certainly cannot err, as to the bounds and extent of Gods *Providential care.* The Scripture tells us, *Heb.* 4. 13. *That all things are naked, and open before him with whom we have to do:* That *the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good*, Prov. 15. 3. My Text ſaith, *He preſerveth both man and beaſt.* The Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* ſaith, *He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.* But to ſpeak more diſtinctly; we extend the Divine Providence, 1. *To all Beings.* 2. To all *motions and actions of Beings.* 3. To all *omiſſions, ſuſpenſions, or ceſſations of action.* 4. *To all events* of things.

1. Firſt, I ſay, to all *Beings.* Beings are uſually diſtinguiſhed into ſuch as have no life, or ſuch as have life. Or if you pleaſe we may make uſe of that plain diviſion of Beings into, 1. Such as have no more *than a meer Being*, neither life, nor ſenſe, nor *reaſon.* Such are the Heavens, the Earth, the Waters. Or, 2. Such as have *Being*, and *life*, but no ſenſe. Such are herbs and plants. Or, 3. Such as have *Being*, and *life*, and *ſenſe.* Such are *Beaſts, Birds, Fiſhes, Inſects*, &c. Or Laſtly, Such as have not only *Being, life, ſenſe*, but *Reaſon* alſo. Such are *Angels* and *Men.* I ſhall ſhew you that Divine Providence extends to all theſe.

1. *To ſuch things as have meer Beings.* As to the Heavens, *Extol God* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt), Pſal. 68. 4. 33, *Who rideth upon the Heavens.* Gods riding upon the Heaven ſignifies his influence upon them, and his Rule and Governance over them.

Our

Our Saviour telleth us, That he maketh *his Sun to ſhine*, and *his Rain to fall upon the juſt and unjuſt*; yea, and God makes it a thing proper to him to *give rain*: and the Scripture telleth you of his giving it, and withholding it at his pleaſure, as in the days of *Elijah*. Job 9. 7, God is ſaid to be he *who commandeth the Sun, and it riſeth not, and ſealeth up the ſtars*. For the Earth, he is ſaid to *hang it upon nothing*; and certainly ſo great a weight would not hold there long, if it were not held up.

2. For thoſe things which have not a meer *Being*, but *life* alſo: they are the herbs, and plants, and *flowers*. *He cauſeth the graſs to grow for the cattel*, Pſal. 104. 24. Pſal. 147. 8, *He maketh the graſs to grow on the mountains: He cloatheth the graſs of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is caſt into the Oven.*

3. For thoſe Beings which have *life* and *ſenſe*. *He feedeth the fowls of the air*, Matt. 6. 18. *Not a ſparrow falls to the ground without him*: he called for the *flies* and *locuſts*, &c. againſt *Pharaoh*.

4. For the moſt perfect Beings, *viz.* ſuch as have not only *Being*, *life*, *ſenſe*, but *Reaſon* alſo; Theſe are either *Angels* or *Men*. *Providence* reacheth to both of theſe; it reacheth to the *good Angels*: he commandeth all his *Angels* to *worſhip Chriſt*; he maketh his *Angels Spirits*, and *his Miniſters a flaming fire*, Heb. 1. 6, 7. and *miniſtring Spirits for the good of his Elect*. How frequently do you read in Scripture of Gods government of his Angels, in ſending them upon his meſſages? For the Devils: the Old Teſtament tells you of his employing them againſt *Ahab*; of his commiſſionating them againſt *Job*. And the New Teſtament plentifully declares their ſubjection to the Son of God. For *Men*; the Scripture ſpeaks abundantly. My Text telleth you, *He preſerveth man and beaſt*. In ſhort, there is hardly a leaf in Scripture but abundantly confirmeth this piece of Divine Providence in one particular or other.

Secondly, I ſay, the *Providence* of God extendeth not only to all Beings, but to all the *Motions* and *Actions of Beings*: upholding them to their motions, governing all their actions. The graſs groweth not, the ſparrow falleth not, the Lilly groweth not, without our Father: he hath made the Ordinances for the Sun, and Moon, and Stars, for the day and night. It is he

that

that *thundereth out of Heaven*, 1 Sam. 7. 10. 2 Sam. 22. 14. The Scripture every-where asserteth the influence of God upon the natural motions of all creatures; nor is it to be excluded from the *voluntary Actions*, whether good or bad. As for good actions, he moveth to them, he assisteth in them. As to *bad actions*, he *upholdeth as to the natural action*, but hath nothing to do with the malice and wickedness of it, but to govern it, when shewed, to his own wise ends. The Scriptures are infinite which might be produced in the proof of this. What can be plainer than that of our Saviour speaking of good actions, *Joh.* 15. 3, *Without me you can do nothing:* that of the Apostle, *Phil.* 4. 13, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me*; and again, *He giveth to will and to do.* For bad actions, *He suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways*, Act. 14. 16. And the Psalmist saith, *Psal.* 76. 10, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain.*

Thirdly, The Providence of God extendeth to all *omissions, cessations*, or *suspensions of actions*; yea, and to *all irregularities of natural motions or actions.* It was from God that the fire did not naturally act to consume the three children; nor the Lions to devour *Daniel* though in their Den; that the Sun stood still in the Valley of *Ajalon*; that it went backward, as appear'd by the shadow upon the Dial of *Ahaz*: and so as to actions depending upon the will of man, *Gen.* 20. 6, God saith to *Abimelech*, that he *suffered him not to touch Sarah*; *Jacob* telleth his Wife, *Gen.* 31. 7, that God suffered not *Laban to hurt him.* Multitudes of Scriptures might be produced in this case.

4. Lastly, The Providence of God extendeth to all *events.* Events are reducible to two heads; they are either such as are *good and grateful* to us, or such as are *evil and afflictive.* The hand of Providence is in both. There is no good event but is from God; he is the fountain of good, the author of every good and perfect gift: *evil events* are from him, *Is there any evil in the City* (saith God by *Amos*), and *I have not done it? Afflictions spring not out of the dust* (saith *Job*). But the holy Scripture is so full of proof of this, as I need not give particular instances; especially considering that it hath been recognized by the children of God in Scripture, and is so by every one of us, so often as we either

praise God for any receit of good, or deliverance from evil; or pray unto him for the collation of any good thing, or prevention or removal of any evil. Thus now I have confirmed the Doctrine of Divine Providence, and also shewed you the extent of it. I should now come to discourse of the particular acts of it; but first let me make some application of this general discourse of *Providence*, so far as I have carried it on.

In the first place, observe from hence, *how unreasonably* and *Atheistically* any deny the *Providence of God*, and that in the extent of it: *Atheistically*, for it is all one to *deny a God*, as to deny the Providence of God. If there be a God, there must be an infinite Being filling all places: infinitely active, all eye, all ear, all understanding, doing all that from his most perfect Effence, which we do by the help of our senses, or any of our faculties. Now that God should fill all places, see, hear, understand all things, motions, actions, events, and not rule, and govern all to the wise ends of his own glory, having a power so to do, is to fancy that of God, which cannot be presumed of a man like our selves. Those therefore that deny *Providence*, must have deceived their own souls with some false ideas, and conceptions of God, and set up an idol in their hearts, instead of the true and living God; Either a finite and limited Being, not filling Heaven and Earth: or a dead, lazy, dull, careless inactive Being. All which is indeed to blaspheme, to deny God instead of acknowledging him. 2. As it is Atheistical, so it is most *irrational*. I have formerly discoursed that, and therefore shall refer you to it. To fancy that the world could be preserved or governed in that order in which we see it, without an infinite God giving conduct to it, ordering it, and ruling it to his pleasure, is to fancy that may be done casually in so vast a place as the whole world, which we see cannot be in a little City or Family; than which nothing is more unreasonable. 3. Nor thirdly is any thing more contrary to the Scripture, for there is no one proposition of truth, that hath a more plentiful evidence of Scripture, than this Doctrine of Providence hath. I beseech you therefore to take heed of suffering any such suggestion, any such thought, or imagination, to possess your hearts: look upon it as a very great piece of *Atheism* to deny, or to dispute it: besides that, as I shall shew you by *Use* 1.

and by; There is no Doctrine of greater use to settle and compose our Spirits under all the varieties of the world, nor to keep us in a more holy, quiet, patient temper, and in a dependency upon God under all accidents which occur to us, than this Doctrine of Providence. Let this therefore be the first use and application of this excellent Doctrine, to settle your hearts in this point, so consequential to a just, and due notion, and a right apprehension of him who is the living and true God.

Use 2. In the second place, Let me apply this by way of caution. You have heard that there is a Divine Influence upon all *Beings*, Motions, Actions, Events, &c. But take heed of two things; 1. Of thinking that *the Providence of God necessitates all motions, and actions of voluntary Agents.* Or, 2. *That it gives any supersedeas to our own endeavours, with reference to Events.* Some Agents indeed act necessarily, all but rational Agents do so; they have no *reason*, and consequently, no counsel, deliberation or election. But reasonable creatures, such as men and women are, have a *Will*, and act from it as from their principle: these the Providence of God influenceth, but doth not compel or necessitate. The Providence of God influenceth a man to good actions, suggesting them to him, moving him and inclining him unto them, but not enforcing him. As to *evil actions*; the influence of Divine Providence is otherwise. God doth not suggest, not move, not incline the heart to them. It upholdeth the creature to the meer natural action. 2. It suffereth the sinner to vent the malice and wickedness of his heart in the action. 3. It governeth the action when done, to the wise end of Gods glory. The influence of Providence neither necessitateth the child of God to do good, nor the sinner to do that which is evil. This is one thing you must warily understand.

Secondly, *Take heed of thinking that the influence of Providence as to all events, supersedeth any thing of lawful endeavours, in order, either to the obtaining a good, or preventing a bad event or issue.* The influence of Gods Providence doth by no means justifie mans improvidence. There is a great deal of reason for this, if we duly weigh it.

1. *Providence is not our rule.* We are to walk by the *Precept*, and to depend upon *Providence*. So that whatsoever the

word

word of God maketh our duty to be done, or uſed as a mean in order to the obtaining of any event, remaineth ſtill our duty, without reſpect to the influence which Providence hath upon events.

2. Again, *The Providence of God doth ordinarily bring about events by our endeavours as means.* It is an extraordinary working of Providence, when it bringeth about an event without humane means; it ordinarily brings them about in, and by the uſe of means: hence it is that we cannot regularly depend upon Divine Providence, without the uſe of proper means. So far is the influence of Providence from ſuperſeding the uſe of means. Thus the Providence of God neither deſtroyeth nature, nor diſcourageth induſtry.

In the third place, I know no Doctrine of further uſe than this, *for the comfort and relief of the ſpirits of Gods people under any of the afflictions of this life.* The wheels of the world ſometimes run very croſs, not only to the expectations of Gods people, but to their ſenſible intereſts: I ſay, to their ſenſible and appearing intereſts, for contrary to what is their true and real intereſt they cannot run. *All things ſhall work together for the good of them that love God.* All things; muſt be *theirs*, for their good, profit and *advantage*. But Gods diſpenſations to them in this life are ſometimes very afflictive, very ingrateful to their ſenſe. Now what a relief is this to a child of God to be aſſured of this, to be rooted and confirmed in this, *That there is a Divine Providence* extending it ſelf to all the *motions and actions of creatures*; To all the *ſuſpenſions*, *omiſſions*, and ceſſations of creatures action. Hence follow divers things, which may be of great relief to us under our diſquietudes. *Uſe* 3.

1. *That the omiſſions, ſuſpenſions, ceſſations of actions in means; yea, their workings contrary to our expectation, are things ordered by Divine Providence.* It is wonderful how great an affliction this thing ſometimes gives perſons of more thoughtful and reflexive tempers. We loſe a friend, and fancy, if ſuch or ſuch means had been uſed, or if ſuch or ſuch a thing had not been done, our husband, child, wife, had not died: you know what *Martha* ſaid to our Saviour, *Joh.* 11, *Lord, if thou hadſt been there, my brother had not died.* But now ſuppoſe this, that if ſuch or ſuch a thing had not been done, in a natural courſe thy friend had lived: (for that is all thou canſt ſay), yet was

not the hand of God in it? had the Providence of God, thinkeſt thou, no influence upon the omiſſion of ſuch a means as was omitted, or the uſe of ſuch things as thou conceiveſt to have been pernicious? *Doth not a ſparrow fall to the ground*, and is thy friend (thinkeſt thou) fallen to the ground, without thy Father? thy Father ordering the *amiſſion of ſuch a mean as might* have preſerved his life, or the uſe of ſuch things as haſtened their diſſolution. God often hides from us what ſhall be the proximate cauſe of our end, and ſo as to our friends. It is true, if we have knowingly, and wilfully omitted or neglected probable means, we have cauſe of ſome reflection; but yet even in that caſe, the *Providence* of God reaching to all events is ſome relief to us. In this ſenſe it is no blaſphemy to ſay, God often deceiveth the Phyſitian, and the ſollicitous friend; that is, ſuffereth them to err under falſe apprehenſion. There is not an omiſſion but *Providence* hath influenced, not a ſuſpenſion, or ceſſation of an uſual action in a natural agent, nor a contrary operation of it, but the *Providence* of God hath influenced it. We, our friends, *are of more worth than many ſparrows*, and fall not to the ground but *by the will of our heavenly Father*; ſo as we do but torment and diſquiet our ſelves in vain.

Secondly, If the *Providence of God influenceth all events*, and that too, by *effecting them*, if not ſinful; *They muſt, as to the people of God, be good*, and *for good*, and *the products both of infinite wiſdom, and of infinite goodneſs*. It is our unhappineſs, that we judg of events to us in this world *by ſenſe*, and not according *to faith*. This maketh us call many things evil; indeed there is nothing can happen to a good man truly evil: for the hand of his Father muſt be in it. *Providence* muſt have the ordering of it, and never did the hand of a good Father, knowingly mix a potion of poiſon to his child, and with his own hand give it him to drink. We do not ask evil of God; and he that heareth our prayers, will not, when we ask him bread, give us a ſtone, nor when we ask him a fiſh, give us a Scorpion. *If we that are evil, know how to give good things to thoſe that ask them of us: much more doth our heavenly Father, know how to give good things to his children, asking them of him.* In this we may be ſecure: If the Providence of God influenceth all the events of the world, he ſo regulates them, that although

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they may prove ſenſible, joyleſs, and afflictive evils; yet they ſhall never prove real evils to thoſe that fear God, but in the iſſue appear the products, as of infinite wiſdom, ſo alſo of infinite goodneſs. Thus far this Doctrine of Divine Providence is a great fountain of conſolation to the people of God.

But laſtly, Let us enquire what duty we may conclude from hence, and that is very much. I ſhall inſtance in ſome few particulars.

1. Is there a Divine Providence? and doth this influence all beings, motions, actions, events, &c? Let us learn then the duty of *faith*, to *commit all our ways unto God, to truſt in him, and depend upon him.* It is a duty we are often in Scripture called to, and that with reſpect to our perſons, and with reſpect to our affairs and ways, 1 *Pet.* 4. 19, *Wherefore let them that ſuffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their ſouls unto him, in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.* Our Saviour preſſeth it in oppoſition to two things.

1. In oppoſition to the *fear of man*, Matt. 10. 28, 29, 30, *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the ſoul. Are not two ſparrows ſold for a farthing, and one of them ſhall not fall on the ground without your Father? But the very hairs of your head are numbred. Fear you not therefore, for you are of more value than many ſparrows.*

2. Again, He preſſeth it in oppoſition to too great ſollicitude, *Matth.* 6. 25. *Therefore I ſay unto you, Take no thought for your life, what you ſhall eat, or what you ſhall drink, nor yet for your body, what you ſhall put on.* This he preſſeth from Gods Providence, for the *Lillies*, the *Birds*, &c. *verſ.* 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

2. *With reſpect to our affairs, and the events of things in the world, ſo far as they concern us.* 1. Pet. 5. 7. *Caſting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.* Pſal. 55. 22. *Caſt thy burden upon the Lord, for he ſhall ſuſtain you.* Pſal. 37. 3. *Truſt in the Lord, and do good.* Verſ. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord: truſt alſo in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs.* Prov. 16. 3. *Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed.* Man troubleth himſelf in vain, both with *care* and *fear*; the Child of God eſpecially. We cannot let God alone to rule and govern the world. But ſurely, if there be a God in the world,

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an immenſe and infinite Being that filleth all places, and infinitely active, ſeeing and hearing all things; and this God is not idle, but influenceth *all beings*, all motions and actions of beings, all ſuſpenſions, omiſſions, and ceſſations of action in the creature, all events; and if he hath any Children, people, or ſervants in the world, whom he loveth, delighteth in, careth for; theſe people may truſt him, and commit themſelves and their ways to him, and it is their duty ſo to do. Who may truſt God? who may commit their ways unto him, if theſe ſhould not? Let me therefore ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* 115. 9, 10, 11. *O Iſrael, truſt thou in the Lord: O houſe of Aaron, truſt in the Lord: you that fear the Lord, truſt in the Lord.* Be not over-ſolicitous, be not ſinfully afraid as to any events. There is a God that ruleth in the earth, that overſeeth the world. But this truſting in God muſt be,

1. In *doing good: Truſt in the Lord, and do good,* Pſal. 37. 3. Our ſouls muſt be committed to the Lord in well-doing, 1 *Pet.* 4. 19. *There is no truſting in the Lord, without walking in his way.* The unholy walking man hath no ground to truſt God for any good: he hath no promiſe to bottom his truſt upon. We muſt truſt God in an holy walking.

2. We muſt, notwithſtanding the Providence of God, truſt God in the *uſe of proper means.* The reaſon for this is, becauſe the Precept commandeth the uſe of lawful means. Truſting of God is indeed excluſive of the uſe of unlawful means, but it always includeth the uſe of means that are proper and lawful. To refuſe proper and lawful means, and talk of truſting God, is to tempt him not to truſt him.

3. It includeth alſo the uſe of *Religious means:* ſuch as the waiting upon God in the uſe of his Ordinances. The word *Sacraments,* and *Prayer: For theſe things* (ſaith God) *I will be enquired of by the houſe of Iſrael.* Prayer is a general means inſtituted by God for the obtaining of any mercy. But I ſay, ſuppoſing theſe three things: That a Child of God keepeth in the Lords way, and hath uſed all proper means for an event which he hath deſired, and ſought the Lord for by Prayer; This Doctrine of Divine Providence ſheweth him the higheſt reaſon imaginable, for his committing both his perſon, and his ways unto the Lord, without any anxious ſollicitude, or diſtracting, fears: Becauſe he is the Lord *who careth for us,* therefore we ſhould caſt our care on him.

2. A second thing which I shall press upon you as your duty, and consequent to this Doctrine of *Providence*, is a *pious security* in all conditions, and with respect to all *events*. There is a sinful security which all good men ought to avoid, and to take heed of. Security is the freedom of the mind from care, as to this or that thing. Now this is sinful two ways.

1. *When the ground of it is some carnal confidence*, a relying on some arm of flesh. *Cursed be he* (saith the Prophet) *that trusteth in man, and makes flesh his arm.* Thus the *Jews* were often secure upon the view of their great allies and confederates, *Assyria* and *Egypt*. In like manner people may be secure upon the account of their relations and interests, or the power and favour of men. We are commanded to *cease from man*, whose breath is in his nostrils; and the *Psalmist* tells us, *It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in Princes.*

2. When there is a *pretended confidence in God, but not conjoyned with an holy walking*, nor with a due use of means, *Natural, Moral*, or *Religious*; take heed of such a security as this is. That which I call a *pious security*, is the fruit of a *confidence in God*. When the minds of men upon the view of a *Divine Providence*, are quiet, and free from distractions, and over-much sollicitude as to the events of things, whether relating to the Church, or to their own particulars. This I say is every good Christians duty: and if there be such a Divine Providence, as I have been discoursing of to you, it is the most reasonable thing in the world. God is the highest rational Agent, and must work for some ends, and those the best; the great end of his Glory, the subordinate end is the good of his People. Now if he hath in his working an influence on all beings, all motions and actions, all omissions, suspensions, and cessations of such motions, all events, *&c.* Certainly that man or woman that loveth and feareth God, and keepeth his way, and hath used all proper means, natural, moral, or religious, in order to the obtaining of what he apprehendeth for Gods Honour, the good of his Church, or his own particular good, he hath all imaginable reason to sit down quiet, and be secure. Affairs in the world are upon the wheels, but those wheels are *full of eyes*: God seeth all things, and his hand is in and upon all things, and hath his own ends in his eyes, and a power to turn all things, and to make them to serve his ends. We may in the darkest day cry out, *Psal.* 76. 10. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise him;*

him, and the remainder of wrath he ſhall reſtrain. A good Chriſtian may ſit down, having done his duty, and leave the world to wag as it will. Let that great Ship wallow as it will, there is one that ſitteth at the Stern, that will guide it, and all its motions, it ſhall at laſt come into the true Port. Hence a Child of God hath reaſon enough *in all things to give thanks*, and at all times *to rejoyce in the Lord, and again to rejoyce.* What then mean the diſquietments, anxieties, and ſollicitudes of our thoughts? Are they not *tacit* denials, or ~~ſuſpenſions~~ of the workings of Divine Providence? Are they not Indications of the weakneſs of our Faith? Certainly if we had Faith in the Doctrine of Divine Providence, if it were but as a grain of muſtard-ſeed; we ſhould only attend our duty, and when we had done that, ſhould ſpeak to our ſoul, if yet in a tumult, *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? why art thou diſquieted within me? Truſt ſtill in God, for I ſhall praiſe him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* This is a ſecond piece of duty.

3. A third duty which this Doctrine of Divine Providence will evidence but reaſonable for us, is, *A patient waiting for God under all the diſpleaſing varieties of this life.* A duty which in Scripture you will find often called for by God, and his Holy Servants, who have ſpoke in his Name, *Pſal.* 27. 14. *Pſal.* 37. 7, 34. ~~*Pſal.* 62. 5~~. *Prov.* 20. 22. *Hoſ.* 12. 6. and as often reſolved upon by the Holy Servants of God, *Job.* 14. 14. *Pſal.* 25. 21. *Pſal.* 52. 9. and in many other places: And there are many excellent promiſes that are made to it, *Pſal.* 37. 9. *Prov.* ~~20. 22~~. *Iſa.* 49. 23. It is excluſive of all murmuring, repining, and diſcontentedneſs at any of Gods dealings; of all uſe of irregular means to help our ſelves: it is an habit of grace, which in the midſt of the moſt adverſe and afflictive Providences, teacheth us to *ſtand ſtill*, and to *ſee the ſalvation of God*. It is a great piece of a Chriſtians duty, keeping a Chriſtian in his ſtation, and in the paths of holineſs, under the moſt croſs and thwarting Providences, in the moſt dark and gloomy days, and the greateſt confuſions we ſee in the world. The failure of this is like the ſtarting of the Ballaſt in a Ship in a ſtorm: every Ship of burthen, that goeth to Sea, hath a *Ballaſt* of ſtones, or ſand, or ſome weighty thing, which keeps it even upon the waters; if in a ſtorm this Ballaſt ſtarts, ſo as it is thrown on one ſide, and gives not a juſt poiſe to the Ship, there is a great danger of a wrack, the Ship

preſently lyes all on one ſide. Faith now is this Ballaſt, active patience, or waiting for God in a ſtorm of Providence, is that which keepeth the ſoul poiſed; if this Ballaſt ſtarts, there's great danger of the ſouls being overwhelmed. Now this Doctrine of *Providence*, and the extent of it to all motions, actions, to all ſuſpenſions, omiſſions, and ceſſations of actions, to all events, and future contingencies, ſheweth us, the duty and reaſonableneſs of this *patient waiting*. Is there a ſtorm, a whirlwind, an hurricane of political motions in the world? It lets us know that God is in that ſtorm, God is in that whirlwind, that hurricane is not without the Lord, and God is not out of it. If the Enemies of the People of God could raiſe a ſtorm without the Lord, or when they have raiſed it ſhut God out of the Governance of it, it were ſomething; but they can do none of this: we can have no confidence in them, in the goodneſs of their natures, or their deſigns; but we may be confident of God, and wait for him. I compared Providence before, to a man of buſineſs, that ſeldom keeps a road; but ever and anon turns out this way, and that way, as his variety of buſineſs leads him; thoſe that will bear ſuch a man company home, muſt ever and anon wait for him, while he turneth out of his road. Let this Doctrine of Providence have this kind influence upon your ſouls, to make you to wait upon God, whiles he hideth himſelf from the houſe of *Jacob*, and to look for him. It is good to wait upon God; for none yet that ever waited upon him, returned aſhamed; it is your duty to wait upon God, he is a *great Soveraign*, he hath required this homage from your ſouls. It is reaſonable you ſhould wait on him; for you may be ſure he is in every ſtorm, in every hurricane, ſeeing it, working by it, governing of it.

4. This Doctrine of a *Divine Providence*, ſheweth the *reaſonableneſs of a paſſive patience, or ſubmiſſion to, and contentation with our lot and portion in the world, under the moſt afflictive and adverſe iſſues*. Nothing comes to paſs without the Will of God, not a ſparrow (as cheap, and inconſiderable a bird as it is) falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father. It is true, while we are in the world, we are in the midſt of briars and thorns; ſubjected to a thouſand accidents, which are afflictive to us, afflictions in our bodies, troubles in our ſpirits, croſſes in our relations, and in our affairs in the world; and no affliction is joyous, but

grievous. It is the great effect of Faith to make us *glory in tribulations*. But certainly, although this Doctrine of Providence doth not shew us a sufficient ground to *glory in tribulations*, which is an exercise of grace most proper in such Tribulations, as we suffer for the name of Christ; as the Apostles *went away rejoycing, that they were thought worthy to suffer any thing for the name of Christ*. But surely the consideration of this Doctrine of Gods Influence upon all events, all motions, all actions, &c. of his Creatures, sheweth us a great reason why we should be *submissive* and *patient*, possessing our souls with patience under the most afflictive contingencies of this life. I remember *Rabshakeh* would not have the men of *Hierusalem* think that he was come out without God against that place. Is affliction come upon thee? Are crosses in thy estate, in thy relations, come upon thee? Think not that any of them are come upon thee without God; the hand of God is in this sickness, in this pain, in this depriving of thee of thy near relations; in this poverty that hath overtaken thee like an armed man. None of these things are come upon thee without God, 1. *Willing them.* 2. Nor without God *influencing them*, ordering the causes of them: now if we do but consider the wisdom and infinite goodness of this God; if we do but look upon him, as our *Father*, how cogently doth the Apostle speak, *Heb.* 12. 10, 11. *Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the father of our spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure: but he for our profit, that we might be made partakers of his holiness.* How many arguments are there in two verses to perswade us to this submissive patience? The main argument is from our *reverent subjection to the Fathers of our flesh*. Hence the Apostle concludes, that we ought much rather to be subject to the Father of our Spirits. 1. They were but the *Fathers of our flesh: he the Father of our spirits.* 2. *They chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit.* But I say here is argument enough, God is in the affliction, *It is the Lord* (said that good man) *let him do what seemeth to him good.* Nothing can seem good to God to bring upon his people, but what truly and really is for their good; he cannot but give good things, dispense and deal out good things unto his people: submit your selves therefore unto God, under his severest Dispensations.

Remember he is in the ſtorm and whirlwind.

5. This Doctrine of Providence may convince you of the reaſonableneſs of your duty of *Prayer.* 1. *Daily Prayer.* 2. *More extraordinary, and ſolemn Prayer.* I ſay firſt *daily Prayer.* Every day is pregnant with new deſigns. The world is a place full of a variety of Beings, and thoſe are in daily motion and action: hence we are ſubject to infinite accidents, and as our Saviour ſaith, *Who can tell what a day may bring forth!* This ſpeaketh our ſubjection to ingrateful changes and mutations. Now certainly the ſame reaſon that teacheth us, if at any time we have any buſineſs of concernment to us (that may (if it goeth for us) be much for our advantage, if againſt us, much to our prejudice) to be diſpatched in *Parliament*, or any Court of Judicature; to apply our ſelves to thoſe perſons, to whom in thoſe caſes we may have acceſs, to intreat them to be our friends, and to lend us their aſſiſtance, ſhould alſo direct us to be as conſtant and diligent in our Applications unto God by *Prayer.* We have great concerns in the world every day, the concerns of our lives, our health, our ſucceſs and proſperity in our affairs, the concerns of all our friends and relations, above all, the concerns of our immortal ſouls. The good proſperity and welfare, or the evil and miſchief of them, all doth very much depend upon the motions and actions of other beings, as well as our own, upon the omiſſions, ceſſations, and ſuſpenſions of their actions, upon the events, *&c.* Now you have heard that the great God of Heaven and Earth filleth the world, influenceth all beings, motions, actions, ceſſations, ſuſpenſions, or omiſſions of action, all events; he is ever preſent, ſeeing, and conſidering the matters of the world; Will not now Reaſon evince it to be our duty, to be much in Prayer alone, with our Families, morning and evening, to be crying to God, *Proſper thou the works of our hands upon us?* Reſtraint of Prayer from God, argues Atheiſm in our hearts, either that with the fool in the *Pſalm*, we ſay in our hearts, *There is no God:* or elſe that we ſay, *Tuſh God, ſeeth us not, the Almighty doth not regard us.*

2. But it lets us ſee the more eſpecial reaſonableneſs of more *ſolemn and earneſt Prayer*, upon more eſpecial Emergencies. I told you that every day is big of events, and *who can tell what any day may, or will bring forth?* But there are ſome more eſpecial times, when we have more high and eminent concerns up-

on ſome ſpecial undertakings, or when ſome eminent danger threateneth us. In reaſon here, our ſenſe of a Divine Providence influencing all events, all Beings, all motions and actions, of Beings, and all omiſſions, ceſſations, or ſuſpenſions of ſuch actions, doth more particularly oblige us, upon the emergency of ſuch affairs, to be more earneſt and importunate with God. It is the precept of *Solomon*, *Acknowledg him in all thy ways, and he ſhall direct thy ſteps*. And accordingly hath been the practice of the people of God; as you ſee it in the whole ſtory of holy Writ, and is the practice of the people of God ſtill. Now this Doctrine of Divine Providence juſtifieth this practice of the children of God, as a very reaſonable practice; and evinceth as daily Prayer, ſo this more ſet and ſolemn prayer to be the reaſonable practice of all thoſe that have any knowledg of God, or any deſire to maintain fellowſhip and communion with him.

6. Laſtly, As it evinceth the duty and reaſonableneſs, both of daily, and of ſolemn and extraordinary prayer: ſo it evinceth alſo the duty, both of *daily*, and more *ſolemn* and *extraordinary praiſes*. We have not a good thing happeneth unto us, but there is an hand of God in it: it may be ſome created Being hath been the inſtrument to bring it to our hand; but the action or motion of that created Being hath been influenced by God. The event or iſſue hath been ordered, governed and directed by God; the hand of God is in every days health and protection, in every nights ſleep and preſervation. But this is obvious enough to every Chriſtian, of how mean a capacity ſoever. I ſhall therefore add no more to this part of my diſcourſe. I have, you ſee, hitherto *proceeded* no farther than to prove, *That there is a Providence*. 2. And *to ſhew* to you *the exceeding great latitude of its objects*.

SERMON

SERMON V, VI.

Heb. I. 3. Pſal. XXXVI. 6.

——Upholding all things by the word of his power.
——O Lord! thou preſerveſt man and beaſt.

I Have hitherto ſhewed you no more, *Than that there is a Divine Providence extenſive to all things*, influencing all *Beings*, all *motions*, and *actions of Beings*, &c. I am now come to diſcourſe concerning the *acts of God*, by which he exerciſeth this Providential care. Divines do uſually reduce all to two Heads. 1. *Preſervation*. 2. *Government*. Preſervation reſpecteth the creatures *Beings*; and that in *eſſe tali*, in ſuch a kind of Being as he at firſt created them. *Government* properly reſpecteth the motions or actions of theſe Beings, or the omiſſions, ſuſpenſions, or ceſſations of ſuch actions or motions, and the events of the things. The Propoſition I ſhall a little enlarge my ſelf upon, is this,

Prop. *That as the worlds were at firſt made by the power and word of God, ſo they are by the ſame power and word preſerved and upheld.*

The Heathens had ſome notion of this, as appeareth by their fiction of *Atlas*, bearing up the world upon his Shoulders. God is the true and only *Atlas*: the Apoſtle ſaith, *He upholdeth all things by the word of his Power*. The Pſalmiſt ſaith, *That he preſerveth both man and beaſt*. You have a recognition of this, in that ſolemn prayer of the *Levites*, Neh. 10. 6, *Thou, even thou, art Lord alone, thou haſt made the Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens, with all their hoſt; the earth, and all things that are therein; the ſea, and all that is therein, and thou preſerveſt them all*. *Job* gives God the glory of this, *Job* 7. 20, *I have ſinned, and*

undertakings, or when some eminent danger ... our sense of a Divine Providence ... all motions and actions, of Beings, ... and all cessations, cessations, or suspensions of such actions, doth more particularly oblige us, upon the emergency of such affairs, to be more earnest and importunate with God. It is the precept of Solomon, *Acknowledg him in all thy ways, and he shall direct thy steps.* And accordingly hath been the practice of the people of God; as you see it in the whole story of holy Writ, and is the practice of the people of God still. Now this Doctrine of Divine Providence justifieth this practice of the children of God, as a very reasonable practice; and evinceth as daily Prayer, so this more set and solemn prayer to be the reasonable practice of all those that have any knowledg of God, or any desire to maintain fellowship and communion with him.

6. Lastly, As it evinceth the duty and reasonableness, both of daily, and of solemn and extraordinary prayer: so it evinceth also the duty, both of *daily*, and more *solemn* and *extraordinary praises*. We have not a good thing happeneth unto us, but there is an hand of God in it: it may be some created Being hath been the instrument to bring it to our hand; but the action or motion of that created Being hath been influenced by God. The event or issue hath been ordered, governed and directed by God; the hand of God is in every days health and protection, in every nights sleep and preservation. But this is obvious enough to every Christian, of how mean a capacity soever. I shall therefore add no more to this part of my discourse. I have, you see, hitherto *proceeded* no farther than to prove, *That there is a Providence*. 2. And *to shew* to you *the exceeding great latitude of its objects*.

Ps. 62. 8.

Psalm 62 I adore SERMON

SERMON V, VI.

Heb. I. 3. Pſal. XXXVI. 6.

——Upholding all things by the word of his power.
——O Lord! thou preſerveſt man and beaſt.

I Have hitherto ſhewed you no more, *Than that there is a Divine Providence extenſive to all things*, influencing all *Beings*, all *motions*, and *actions of Beings*, &c. I am now come to diſcourſe concerning the *acts of God*, by which he exerciſeth this Providential care. Divines do uſually reduce all to two Heads. 1. *Preſervation*. 2. *Government*. Preſervation reſpecteth the creatures *Beings*; and that in *eſſe tali*, in ſuch a kind of Being as he at firſt created them. *Government* properly reſpecteth the motions or actions of theſe Beings, or the omiſſions, ſuſpenſions, or ceſſations of ſuch actions or motions, and the events of the things. The Propoſition I ſhall a little enlarge my ſelf upon, is this,

Prop. *That as the worlds were at firſt made by the power and word of God, ſo they are by the ſame power and word preſerved and upheld.*

The Heathens had ſome notion of this, as appeareth by their fiction of *Atlas*, bearing up the world upon his Shoulders. God is the true and only *Atlas*: the Apoſtle ſaith, *He upholdeth all things by the word of his Power*. The Pſalmiſt ſaith, *That he preſerveth both man and beaſt*. You have a recognition of this, in that ſolemn prayer of the *Levites*, Neh. 10. 6, *Thou, even thou, art Lord alone, thou haſt made the Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens, with all their hoſt; the earth, and all things that are therein; the ſea, and all that is therein, and thou preſerveſt them all*. *Job* gives God the glory of this, *Job* 7. 20, *I have ſinned; and*

and what ſhall I do unto thee, O thou preſerver of man! But although the upholding, and preſervation of the world, the influence of God upon the world, in order to its ſtanding and conſervation, be matter of clear and undoubted *Revelation*, and demonſtrable by reaſon, and confeſſed even by the wiſer amongſt the Heathens themſelves; yet every one poſſibly doth not ſufficiently underſtand the method and order of Gods ſuſtentation, and preſervation of the world: Nor dare I promiſe you fully to open it to you, and make you to underſtand it, for *how little a portion of his ways do we know?* But ſomething I will ſpeak in particular. I hope it may be of further uſe to you, not only to expound Gods works, but to make you underſtand how wonderfully we are preſerved, and what a neceſſity there is of the Divine hand to uphold our ſouls in life, and us in any ſtate of well-being. Only let me firſt premiſe two or three things.

1. That there is a *more common and general preſervation of all beings*, and a *more ſpecial preſervation of ſome.*

2. That *there is a preſervation common* both to *man* and *beaſt*, and a *preſervation more peculiar to man; and yet more ſpecial to the people of God*, thoſe amongſt the ſons of men, whom God hath ſet apart for himſelf.

3. That there is a preſerving Providence, *reſpecting the body* and *outward man:* and a *preſerving Providence, reſpecting the inward man.*

4. That as to man he is conſiderable in a *threefold capacity.* 1. In his *perſonal capacity*, as a reaſonable creature, endued with all the powers and faculties of *vegetive* and *ſenſitive creatures:* and further, with ſeveral powers, and faculties ſuited to his reaſonable nature. 2. In his *Political capacity*, as he makes up a member of a Kingdom, or civil ſociety. 3. In his *Eccleſiaſtical capacity*, as in ſociety with others he makes up that body of people which is called *the church of God.* God preſerveth him in all theſe capacities; of which (when I come to it) I ſhall ſpeak more particularly, and diſtinctly.

I ſhall lay down ſeveral concluſions. The firſt of which ſhall be more general and extenſive to ſuch creatures as have meerly being, and no life. The other will concern *living creatures*, and amongſt them men, as the nobler and more excellent of them.

1. *Concl.*

1. *Concl. God by the word of his power upholdeth the Beings, order, and courſes of all his creatures; ſo as not only their natural inclinations, and qualities, and affections, by which they are mutually ſerviceable to each other, and to the upholding of the univerſe, do not fail, abate, or decay, but ſo, that their power and oppoſite qualities work not to the ruin and deſtruction of the whole.* This now to him who will give his thoughts leave to ſtand upon it, will appear a great and wonderful work of God, and no leſs than a wonderful miracle of Divine Providence. When God gave a being to the world, and to all the things therein, he indued them all with ſeveral qualities, according to his infinite wiſdom; he ſet them in an excellent order, ſo as they might be mutually ſubſervient one to another, and all of them to the whole: he did not only make the world, but he *fitted and jointed it together*, ſo that one part of it correſponded with the other. 2. *He indued them with ſeveral qualities*, by which they are mutually ſerviceable each to other. 3. *He ſet the ſeveral creatures in their orders and ſtations*, ſo as they might be beſt ſerviceable. Now, I ſay, the Providence of God worketh in the preſerving of them. 1. By *upholding theſe qualities*, and keeping them in this order, that they do not diſlocate and fall out of joint, but abide both in their ſtation, and in their full vigor and vertue.

2. *By keeping them that the qualities in them, which are oppoſite one to another, and would naturally encline them to a diſlocation and falling out of order, yet have no ſuch operation, nor produce any ſuch effect*; but even inanimate Beings, move and work orderly according to the Creators intention, though they do nothing out of any counſel, choice, or deliberation. Let me but illuſtrate this a little, in the four great Inanimate Bodies of the World; the *Heavens*, the *Air*, the *Earth*, and the mighty *Waters*. All exceeding great, and vaſt bodies, yet without life, ſenſe, or reaſon; ſo as their motions cannot be from reaſon and counſel of their own. The order in which God ſet theſe things in the day of Creation was this, The *Heavens he placed uppermoſt*, the *Air in the midſt* betwixt them and the Earth. Then he placed the Earth; and *the Seas in the midſt*, contiguous one to another. In the Heavens he placed Waters, the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, all great bodies. Now all theſe bodies have ſeveral qualities; *Gravity*, or *weight*, *levity*, *heat*, *cold*,

cold, *moiſture*, &c. Who knoweth not that *active qualities* in creatures are ſubject to ſpend, waſte, and decay? To inſtance but in that one body of the Sun, whoſe great qualities are *light* and *heat*: We ſee candles, and torches, and fires give light and heat; but they ſpend themſelves, their light goes out, their heat waſtes, and ſpends it ſelf in a ſhort time. How is it that it is not ſo with the Sun, and the Stars, but from the power of God that upholds theſe qualities, that they neither waſte nor abate from their continual motion? The candle is fed from the tallow, and wax; the torch, and taper from *pitch*, *wax*, *rozin*, and other combuſtible matter; when that fails, it expireth. Whence is the *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars* fed? but from the immediate upholding power and hand of God? Again, theſe great bodies are not indeed ſo groſs, and heavy, as mere ſublunary and terrene bodies are; but yet, they muſt not be denied ſomething of weight, eſpecially the *Waters* in the Heavens. We know weight and heavineſs is of the nature of Water; yea, of that Water which falleth from Heaven: how come the Clouds which are a thin body, to contain and reſtrain it, and keep it as in bottles? how come thoſe vaſt bodies of Water to be contained in the thin body of the Clouds, and to diffuſe themſelves ſo gradually upon the Earth?

2. Let us look upon the *Air*, from the agitation of which *proceed the great and boiſterous ſtormy winds*. The Air is cold, and moiſt, only heated and warmed from the Sun: how comes it to paſs, that it is not in that continual agitation, which we ſee it in ſometimes? ſometimes we hardly diſcern it moved at all, ſometimes more violently, and that ſometimes from one quarter, ſometimes from another; is this a natural, a meer natural motion? then it is neceſſary, and would be uniform: ſo we ſee it is not. Who can give a reaſon ſufficient to ſatisfie an inquiſitive Philoſopher, of the *heat* and *cold* in the Air in ſeveral Countrys, nay, in our own Country? or a ſufficient reaſon of drought and moiſture in the Air? whence is it think you, that it is not always dry, nor always moiſt; not always ſtormy, nor always calm, none of which would ſuit the conſervation of the world, but from Gods upholding thoſe qualities in thoſe bodies which influence it, and by which theſe things are cauſed? ſo that unleſs when the ordinary Providence of God is not withheld from the creatures, in ſome particular

places,

places, for the chastisement of the wickedness of them that dwell therein. The Air keeps its motion, and courses: the winds their courses, for the preservation of our bodies, and the advantage of humane affairs. God, I say, by a daily providence upholds these Beings to those motions, and measures of motion, which he at first set for them, in order to keeping the World in joint. The Air putrifieth not, nor groweth infectious; the Winds sometimes blow, sometimes are still, &c. The *Psalmist* giveth God the great glory of his Providence, in this particular, very plentifully. *He raiseth the stormy winds*, Psalm 107. *v.* 25. *He walketh upon the wings of the wind*, Psalm 104. 3. *He bringeth the winds out of his treasures*, Psalm 133. 7. *He causeth his winds to blow*, Psalm 147. 18. *The stormy winds fulfil his word*, Psalm 148. 8. The *Heathens* had such a sense of the Necessity of a Divine Providence to rule this Creature, that they devised a God on purpose (whom they called *Æolus*) whom they feigned to have a care and dominion over them: and the Poet saith, That if he did not, they would confound Heaven, and Earth.

3. From the *Air* let us come to the *Earth*, a great and vast body. *Job* saith, *It hangeth upon nothing*, Job 26.7, upon nothing but the Almighty power of divine Providence. It hangeth in the midst of the Air, and that upon nothing God did hang it there, in the day of Creation: the Seas are contiguous to it, both of them make but one Globe, or round body of a great weight. We see it is of the nature of weighty Bodies to incline and press downward. Suppose God did at first hang it there, What is it keeps it there? We should conclude it a great Miracle, not to be effected by other than a divine Power, to see but a great stone, or *Canon-bullet* hang in the air; how would a whole City come out, and be astonished at so great a sight? especially, if it should hang there a month, or a year, or any considerable proportion of time. But who sufficiently contemplateth this great sight? Who thinks on the immense weight of the Earth, and the Seas, hanging in the midst of the thin body of the air? Let the Atheists of this generation come near, and see this great sight! If there be no God, or if this God exerciseth no Providence in the upholding and governing created Beings: How cometh the Earth to hang upon nothing? or how doth it abide one day in that station? Let any of them in an open field

climb up, and hang up a Cannon-bullet ſo if they can. I know the Philoſophers tell us, it is in its Center, and every thing naturally reſts there. The Poet tells us, That *Ponderibus librata ſuis.* But this is all but an idle and an impertinent muffling us with unintelligible terms: for what do they mean by the *center of things*, the center of the *Heavens*, or *the center* of the Earth, or of the Waters, unleſs they underſtand the place which God ordained for them, or wherein God fixed them in Creation? in that they abide, and we ſay, there Providence keepeth them. Let them try if the art of all the men in the World can ſo poiſe a great weight in the air, that it ſhall not fall, but abide hanging there any conſiderable time.

4. Laſtly, let us view the great *body of the Waters*, in continual flux and reflux; whether they be placed higher than the Earth, is a little queſtion: But ſuppoſe they be not, certain it is, that the winds oft raiſe them much higher than the Earth: they are of a fluid Nature, of a great weight, in continual motion; whence is it that they do not drown the World, or at leaſt a great part of it? It is a matter of demonſtration, that in many places, they riſe higher every ſide than the Earth next adjacent to them: How comes it, that the Sands check them, that in many places, they bring their bridle in their mouth, an huge quantity of ſmall ſtones or ſands, which make a bank on every ſide to protect the adjacent Earth againſt their rage? certainly no reaſon can be given, but what the holy ſervants of God have long ſince given. *Job* 26. 10, *He hath compaſſed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end.* And *Jer.* 5. 22, *He hath placed the ſand for a bound to the ſea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot paſs.* Now ſuppoſe ſuch a Decree, theſe inanimate Creatures obey it not out of *election and choice*, but being natural Agents, they work and move neceſſarily according to the affections and inclinations, which God hath created them with. So as the water being fluid, and heavy, would from a neceſſity of natural working, overflow and drown the Earth, did not God by his Providence continually work, eſtabliſhing his Decree, and ſeeing to the execution of it; and to that end governing theſe inanimate Creatures, contrary to their natural inclinations, that the World may be kept in order, knitted and jointed together; and the qualities and affections of one creature may not work to the ruin and prejudice of another, and ſo to the

the ruin and deſtruction of the whole. And thus I have opened to you my firſt Concluſion, ſhewing you the Method and order of Gods working in the preſervation of his creatures: in their beings, ſtations, and orders; and in upholding the uſeful qualities of them, that they do not waſte or decay; and the reſtraining and governing of their oppoſite qualities, that they ſhall not work according to their natural tendencies and inclinations to deſtroy the World, or ſpoil the beauty, comelineſs, and order of it. Nor do they tranſgreſs, but upon Gods withdrawing this Providence, this ordinary Providence. Whence come inundations of Waters, infections in the Air, ſtrange motions of Celeſtial bodies in ſome places, as the juſt, and wiſe God at any time, will pleaſe to make uſe of any part of the hoſts of his Creatures, to execute his Vengeance; either upon particular Perſons, Countries, or places. But thus much ſhall ſerve to have been ſpoken for the illuſtration of the firſt Concluſion. The others will reſpect ſuch creatures, as have *life and ſenſe*. I proceed to a ſecond.

Concl. 2. *God preſerveth his creatures which have life; or life, and ſenſe; or life, ſenſe, and reaſon; by a daily providing for them food, and nouriſhment, and directing them to their proper food, and an ordinary avoiding of what is noxious, and deſtructive to their bodies.* Of living Creatures there are three orders: 1. Such *as have nothing but being and life*; ſuch are *Plants*, and *Herbs*. 2. *Such as have not only being, and life, but alſo Senſe.* Such are *Birds* in the Air; *Beaſts, and creeping things in the Earth*; Fiſhes in the Sea; *Inſects, and other creatures*, that live on the Earth, and in the Air, which the *Birds*, and Fowls alſo do. 3. *Such as have not only being*, and *life*, and *ſenſe*, but alſo *Reaſon*. Theſe are (upon the Earth) only Men, and theſe only have Bodies. All theſe creatures *having life*, and that in a bodily ſubſtance: and ſo being in continual motion, are of mutable periſhing, and decaying beings; and the lapſes and decays of their Natures muſt be daily repaired by nouriſhment; to the taking of which, they are naturally inclined, by the *paſſions* of *Hunger* and *Thirſt*: and by this Nouriſhment all know that all ſorts of creatures are preſerved, and without this they cannot live. Now as to this, the Providence of God is eminently ſeen in three things inſtanced in, in this ſecond Concluſion.

1. *God provideth it for them.* All Vegetables; *Trees, herbs,*

plants, are nourished by *heat* and *moisture*. The moisture is either the natural fatness of the Earth, or the adventitious dew of Heaven, or falling of water from thence, either in a more fluid form, which we call *Rain*; or congealed, as Snow, and Hail. The heat is from the Sun. There is a natural moisture in the Earth; it is also in part watered from the Springs and fountains of water into it, from the contiguity of the waters to it; but we see in a time of drought how all these fail. The Earth is parched, and dry; God reneweth its moisture by showers from Heaven; by *Rain*, and *Snow*, and *Dew*, &c. Moisture alone will feed few plants, if any. They must have heat, as well as moisture; Some, and the most must have the beams of the Sun, all must have the heat of it diffused through the Air. Now who is he, who in the Heavens *hath set a Tabernacle for the Sun, which as a Bridegroom cometh out of his Chamber, and rejoyceth as a strong man to run his Race?* Is it not Gods? *Psalm* 19. 4, 5. Our Saviour tells us, *Matth.* 5, *He maketh his Sun to shine, and his rain to fall upon the just, and upon the unjust.* The *Heathens* lay under so much conviction of this, that their Poets feigned a Chariot of the Sun, which none but their God *Phœbus* could drive, without burning the World. For the Rain, how plentifully doth the Scripture give unto God the Prerogative of it. *Hath the rain a father*; or *Who begot the drops of dew?* Job 38. 28, *He causeth it to rain upon the earth*, 26. *He giveth rain*, Jer. 5. 24. *He maketh lightnings with rain*, Jer. 10. 3; Yea, and *none but he can do it*, Jer. 14. 22. *Are there any amongst the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the Heavens give showers? Art not thou he, O Lord our God? therefore will we wait upon thee, for thou hast made all these things.* Thus the Lord provideth food for *vegetables*. The sensitive Creatures are the Birds, and Fowls of the air, the beasts, and creeping things of the Earth; the Fishes of the Sea: These live partly upon herbs, and plants, and the seed, grain, and fruit of them; partly upon each other, the greater devouring the lesser. God in providing a nourishment for herbs, and plants, provides a nourishment for the most of them; as also by upholding the procreating virtue of some creatures, he provideth food for others. Man liveth upon the creatures of inferiour order to him; partly upon vegetables, herbs, roots, the fruits of plants; partly upon sensitive creatures. God hath given him a commission to *Kill, and Eat*. God provideth food

food for Man, by upholding the budding, germinative, seed-bearing qualities of plants, and the growing vertues of them, and by upholding the procreative vertue of birds, beasts, fishes, &c. without which those species would fail from the Earth, and Man who lives upon them, would perish also.

2. Secondly, The workings of Divine Providence are seen in *directing them to their proper food.* Whence is it that each creature knoweth its proper food, and is inclined by its appetite to that only? Let me, as to these two things, shew you how plentifully the Scripture speaketh. God takes the glory of this, *Job* 38, *Wilt thou hunt the prey for the Lion? or fill the appetite for the young Lion?* V. 39, *Who provideth for the Raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, when they wander for want of meat?* Our Saviour telleth us, *Matt.* 6. 26. That it is God, *who feedeth the young Ravens.* The *Psalmist* giveth God the glory of this, *Psalm* 104. 27, *These wait all upon thee, that thou maist give them their meat in due season: That which thou givest them they gather, thou openest their hand, they are filled with good.* These all wait upon thee: Who are these? the *wild asses.* V. 11, *He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run amongst the hills: they give drink to every beast of the field, the wild asses quench their thirst.* V. 14, *He causeth the grass to grow for the Cattel, and herbs for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the Earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oyl to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth mans heart.* V. 21, *The young Lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.* V. 30, *Thou renewest the face of the Earth.* God at first said, *Let the earth bring forth grass,* Gen. 1. 11. *He sendeth the grass of the field,* Deut. 11. 15; *He causeth it to grow for the cattel, and herb for the service of man.* He multiplyeth the beasts of the field, the birds, and fowls of the air. *He leaveth us not without witness, but giveth fruitful times, and seasons, filling the hearts of men with food, and gladness.*

3. From *whence is it, but from the influence of God, upon his Creatures, that Creatures universally, and ordinarily avoid the eating of such things as would be noxious to them,* and many creatures, if they be distempered, are directed to such things as will cure them? But this is enough to have spoken to the second *Conclusion.*

3 *Concl.* Thirdly, *God preserveth living Creatures, by upholding*

ing thoſe faculties in all living creatures, upon the operations of which their lives are preſerved, their ſpecies are propagated, and they are to propagate their ſpecies, and to perform thoſe actions which are proper to their ſeveral Beings, and natures.

To uphold the Creation, as to thoſe things in it which have life, there are divers faculties neceſſary which muſt be upheld: here are four ſorts mentioned in the Concluſion. Let me ſpeak a little to each of them. It will be of excellent uſe to convince you of the neceſſity of a Divine influence, or Providence upon you every moment. 1. The firſt ſort are thoſe: *By which the Beings, the lives, and beings of Creatures are preſerved, and encreaſed to their due proportion.* Theſe are thoſe which belong to thoſe principal faculties, which the Philoſophers calls *Facultatem altricem, & auctricem:* (I will put them together) and inſtance in divers particulars. We are craving, changeable creatures, ſubject to waſts and decays in our beings; and we muſt have a *Nutritive faculty*, or we could not live: The action of this faculty is called *Nutrition*, or Nouriſhing. Now our nouriſhing depends upon our food, the change of our food in our ſtomachs by the natural heat of our ſtomachs; and this dependeth upon ſeveral powers, which God hath created in all ſenſitive creatures; in the upholding of which, the daily Providence of God is wonderfully experienced, although poſſibly, not ſo wiſtly obſerved, and conſidered by us as it ought to be. Let me a little awaken you to a due conſideration of it, by inſtancing in ſeveral Particulars.

1. In the firſt place, We *have a power, a natural power to crave and deſire food.* Without an appetite the creature deſires no food, can take none, though it be ſet before him; but inſtead of it, the very ſight of it maketh him ſick: he loatheth and abhorreth it, and calleth to have it taken away out of his ſight, as we ſee in daily experience. Now I would know by what this faculty is upheld, but by the concourſe and daily operation of Providence? I do not intend to divert here into a Philoſophical diſcourſe, concerning the cauſes of a decay of our appetite. It is ſufficient to tell you, that the cauſes may be various, and the variety of the cauſes, which may produce ſuch an effect, is ſufficient evidence, that nothing but the upholding power of Divine Providence can hinder it. It is God that muſt give us our daily food, and it is God that muſt give us a ſtomach, or appetite to it; and the cauſes are ſo many which may abate and deſtroy our

ap-

appetite, that did not God daily watch over us, and influence us, as to this very thing, it were an hard thing to conceive, how it ſhould keep preſerved a few days, much leſs as it is with many, to very many years.

2. But ſuppoſe us to have an appetite (to ſay nothing of our power to take, and chew, and ſwallow our food); We ſee by a daily experience, if we have not a power to *digeſt it*; if the natural heat of our ſtomachs be from any cauſe abated, ſo as it will not change our food, and this continueth upon us for any time, and no remedy can be apportioned to it, the creature dyeth, whether it be man or beaſt. If the nap of the ſtomach be but worn off, our bodies ſoon appear thredbare; we pine away, and preſently ſink into our graves: by which we learn, that a natural faculty, power, or ability to digeſt our food, is neceſſary to the preſervation of our beings. As I ſaid before of the Appetite, ſo I ſhall ſay again of this. I intend no diſcourſe of the variety of cauſes, from which ſuch a thing may proceed, but the poſſibility of ſuch a thing, and that as an effect of various cauſes, evinceth a neceſſity of a daily influence of God upon us, to uphold this faculty in its vigour and efficacy, which miniſtreth to our nutrition.

3. But thirdly, ſuppoſe our food taken into our bodies, concocted, and digeſted in our ſtomachs that it may nouriſh the whole body; it muſt be by ſeveral veſſels and channels diſtributed to the ſeveral parts of the body. So as there muſt be ſuppoſed a *freedom* from *obſtructions in thoſe paſſages*, and an *attractive vertue and faculty in the ſeveral parts*. If theſe paſſages be any way ſtopped, or the *attractive vertue* abated, the parts are not nouriſhed, but decay and wither, the creatures being deſtroyed. Of ſuch obſtructions we have daily examples: and indeed, whoſo conſidereth the various paſſages in our bodies, through which that part of our food, which proves for nouriſhment paſſeth, and the variety of obſtructions to which we are ſubject, muſt needs again acknowledg, that our Souls muſt be kept in life, our bodies in health, meerly by a Divine Power.

4. Again, What we take into our bodies for our proper food, being in part, found either not proper for us, or in too great a proportion; when the ſtomach hath done its office, *there is a ſeparation* made, that not proper for us, or in a ſuperfluous proportion for that end, muſt be voided and caſt out; and a *natural facul-*

ty to do it, muſt be ſuppoſed, which if it ceaſeth but for a while, or the freedom of the paſſages, by which it paſſeth be obſtructed, the life of the creature quickly determineth. Now, whoſo conſidereth the variety of powers, and faculties in a living body, which muſt be all upheld, and the variety of cauſes, from which they may be incumbred, yea and quite deſtroyed; will be forced to acknowledg the inceſſant influence of Divine Providence, in upholding, and preſerving both the being and well-being of every creature that hath a ſenſitive life.

2. But yet here is not all: For in order to our nouriſhing, *not only thoſe faculties in the body nouriſhed, which I have mentioned, muſt be upheld; But alſo the faculties, and vertues in the bodies nouriſhing, by which they are made nouriſhing to us.* In all nouriſhing, there muſt be a body giving the nouriſhment, as well as a body receiving it: each of theſe muſt have its faculties upheld, or there will be no nutrition, and conſequently no preſervation of life. Philoſophy telleth us, that the nouriſhment of living bodies muſt be, 1. *Something that hath a capacity to be turned into the ſubſtance of our bodies*, elſe how can it nouriſh? Hence it is, that a man cannot feed, or be nouriſhed, by *ſtones*, or *dirt*: there is not in theſe things a capacity to be turned into humane fleſh. 2. It muſt have *ſomething of contrariety in it to the body nouriſhed*, otherwiſe the ſtomach would make no alteration of it. And 3. *It muſt have in* it *ſomething of ſimilitude*, elſe it would never incorporate with us, and join it ſelf to our fleſh, or mix it ſelf with our blood. All our food muſt have ſome qualities in it, that muſt be accommodate to our nouriſhment; and theſe qualities, or faculties muſt be upheld in it, and upheld too in ſome due proportion. Hence we ſee, that food when corrupted and putrified, and ſo hath loſt theſe faculties and vertues, and they be extinguiſhed, it inſtead of nouriſhing us, breeds diſeaſes, and deſtroyeth us. Now God preſerveth the life and being of his creatures, by a daily concurrence of his Providence, as well by upholding the nouriſhing vertues and qualities of their food, as thoſe natural faculties, by which they crave, concoct, and digeſt, or attract their nouriſhment; or expel, and throw out that part of it which is not proper for the nouriſhment of their bodies. But this is enough to have ſpoken as to that firſt principal Faculty, by which the life, and being of all ſenſitive living creatures are preſerved.

2. A second *principal Faculty* by which the life of creatures is preserved, is that of *Respiration* or breathing, which is the motion of the breasts and lungs by which they draw in air, and again puff it out, thus continually cooling the heat of the heart, which would else soon determine the life of the creature. A Faculty so necessary, that we daily see with what difficulty the creature liveth, when it is any way incumbred; daily experience we have of this in persons sick of Consumptions, or Asthma's, &c. When any living creature is once wholly deprived of this, it presently dieth. This God giveth and maintaineth: *He giveth to all Life, and Breath, and all things*, Acts 17. 25. He also taketh it away; *Thou takest away their breath, and they die* (saith the *Psalmist*), Psalm 104. 29. God is said to be the God, *who spreadeth forth the Earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people, and spirit to them that walk thereon*, Isa. 42. 5. Now God preserveth both man and beast, by upholding this power or faculty in them, by which they draw in, and puff out the air: yea, and his daily Providence appeareth also in the preserving of the air which they suck in, ordinarily, from such affections and qualities as would destroy life in his creatures: I say, ordinarily, to except those special remissions of Divine Providence in this case, by which God sometimes punisheth persons and places by a noxious and infected air, as the procreative causes of more Epidemical sicknesses and distempers. And this sheweth us, how reasonable a thing it is, *That all that hath breath should praise the Lord*, according to the *Psalmists* exhortation, *Psalm* 150.

3. A *third principal Faculty*, necessary to the *upholding* of the *life* and being of creatures, is that by *which* they *sleep*, and *take* their alternate rest: *Quod caret alterna requie durabile non est.* Experience tells us, that we can live very little while without *sleep*; we must therefore have a *power to sleep*. There is no living creature that is always asleep, or always awake; we must have a power to sleep, and a power to awake again, or we cannot live. Some sleep more, some less, all must sleep sometime. *Sleep* is a cessation of the *common sense* and the exterior *senses from action*. The Eye seeth not, the Ear heareth not, &c. Now this is caused (say the Philosophers) from the ascending up of vapors out of the stomach, which stop the passage of the animal spirits from the brain; which vapours when they are spent, and the passages

are clear again, man *waketh*, and the ſenſes return to their exerciſe. Be the cauſe what it will, certain it is, it is neceſſary in order to the *holding of our ſouls in life:* we muſt have a power both to ſleep and to wake, and this power muſt be preſerved; and by the upholding and preſerving of this power and faculty, both men and beaſts are upheld, preſerved, and kept alive. Now I ſay, this is Gods work; he that made the *deep ſleep* at firſt to *fall upon Adam* in the day in which he was created, *Gen.* 2. 21; makes ordinary ſleep to fall upon all living creatures. *He giveth ſleep to his Beloved*, Pſalm 127. *v* 2. It is a piece of his promiſe, *Prov.* 3. 24, *Thou ſhalt lie down, and thy ſleep ſhall be ſweet. David* complained, that *God held his eyes waking*, Pſalm 77. 4. And thus I have ſhewed you, how *God preſerveth both man and beaſt*, by upholding and preſerving thoſe powers and faculties in their Bodies, by which they are kept in life, and their Being is preſerved.

2. But both men and beaſts are very ſmall when they firſt come into the World. Their Beings afterward increaſe; and this muſt be by a natural power, which God the great Creator hath created in them at firſt, and made every creature to be brought forth with, without which it could not grow beyond its proportion in the firſt day of its production into the World. This is that which the Philoſopher calls *Facultatem Auctricem*; *the power by which the living creature grows and increaſeth to a juſt perfection and meaſure.* I ſay, a juſt meaſure, for no creature groweth always. The God of Nature hath ſet a juſt meaſure to every Being: This Power alſo muſt be upheld, or the World would be full of none but Children, and very ſmall beaſts. The *Pſalmiſt* ſaith, *Pſalm* 104. 14, *He cauſeth the graſs to grow for the cattel*; and by a parity of Reaſon, he muſt alſo cauſe the cattel to grow for the graſs. Chriſt hath taught us, that we cannot add *one cubit to our ſtature*: It is true, man and beaſt grows to both their juſt dimenſions by a *natural faculty*; mans growth ſtops at *thirty years, or under*, by a *natural Law.* But God at firſt created in them this Natural faculty; and God by a daily concourſe of his Providence *upholdeth, enliveneth*, and *aſſiſteth* this *natural faculty*, and by this particular act of his Providence he doth preſerve and uphold both man and beaſt, as in their Beings, ſo in their juſt dimenſions and proportions in which we ſee them ſupplying and adorning the World.

3. But

3. But thirdly, Suppoſing all living creatures preſerv'd and upheld in their ſeveral lives and beings by Gods upholding and preſerving thoſe ſeveral powers and faculties in the object of their nouriſhment, by which they are made fit nouriſhment for their bodies: and thoſe ſeveral faculties in their bodies, which are the ſubjects to be nouriſhed, by vertue of which they deſire their due food, concoct, digeſt it, &c. and to uphold the juſt proportions of creatures in the World, by preſerving and upholding in them that faculty by which they dilate themſelves, grow, and increaſe to the law of Magnitude which the great Creator hath ſet for them: yet if they had not all a ſeveral power to propagate their *ſpecies* or *kind*, the World, or at leaſt *the living creatures* in the World, would quickly ceaſe; the days of mans life are three or fourſcore years, the days of moſt other creatures much leſs. God hath therefore created all living things *with a power to propagate their ſpecies*, ſome one way, ſome another: of all he hath, he ſaith in the day they were created, *Let them increaſe and multiply:* and hath created ſeveral powers and vertues in them, by which, as all *ſpecies*, ſo moſt individuals doth ſo. To ſome individuals of moſt kind he denieth this, or at leaſt concurreth not by his Providence to the effects of it. Some Men and Women are barren; ſo are ſome beaſts: generally not ſo: and this is another act of Divine Providence, by which he preſerveth both man and beaſt, and eminently attributed to God. The *Rabbies* tell us of three Keys which God keepeth: the Key *of the Clouds*, of *the Womb*, of *the Grave*. None can give Rain but God; none can open the Graves but God; none can open the Womb but God. *Pſalm* 113. 9, *He maketh the barren womb to keep houſe.* Pſalm 127. 3, *Children are the heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward.* It is as true of other creatures as of man; *He turneth a fruitful land into barrenneſs*, Pſalm 107. 34. It was Gods Promiſe, *Exod.* 23. 26, *There ſhall nothing caſt her young, nor be barren in thy land.* Deut. 7. 14, *There ſhall neither male nor female be barren amongſt you, nor amongſt your cattel.* The flocks of the field and of the air, the herds of Cattel, the multitudes of Fiſh in the waters, the numberleſs Families of the Earth, they are all preſerved by the daily concurrence of Divine Providence, in the upholding of that natural power and vertue with which he hath created them, by which *they propagate their ſpecies:* by the pro-

pagation of which, and the multiplication, and the ſucceſſion of individuals in it, *Man*, and *beaſt*, the whole living World is preſerved.

4. *There is yet a fourth ſort of Powers and Faculties, which I called thoſe faculties, abilities, or powers, which are neceſſary to every living being, for the performance of its ſeveral operations according to the ſpecifick nature of it. God alſo preſerveth man and beaſt, by upholding, and preſerving theſe to their ſeveral operations.* The Herb hath only a *vegetative ſoul*, by vertue of which it grows, buds, bloſſoms, *produceth its ſeed*, &c. The beaſts have a *ſenſitive ſoul*, which works a little further: Man hath a *reaſonable ſoul*, comprehenſive of all the powers and vertues of the former, and extending further; he ſeeth, heareth, perceiveth things by his outward and inward ſenſes. By his Underſtanding he gains the notion of things, judgeth of them: he willeth, and chuſeth by his will, &c. Now his power to all theſe, and other operations proper to his nature, muſt be preſerved and upheld, or he can do none of theſe things. Theſe powers are not indeed all neceſſary to our being, and the keeping of our ſouls in life; but the upholding of them is neceſſary to our perfection, and the actions that are proper to the ſtations wherein we are, and the capacities in which we ſtand: God hath not only created in the Soul a power to ſee, hear, taſt, &c. and created the Eye to be the Organ to the viſive Faculty, and the Ear to be the Organ to the *hearing faculty*, and the *pallat* to be the Organ for the faculty of diſcerning taſts: but he concurreth with his Providence both to uphold the *faculty in the ſoul*, and to keep the ſeveral Organs in tune and order, that by and through them as means, thoſe faculties might be exerciſed; and as the upholding both the faculties and Organs, or inſtruments, the bodily members, by which they are exerciſed in their due ſtate, is the cauſe why we hear, ſee, taſt, &c. ſo Gods withholding that concurrence, as to ſome individual perſons, is the reaſon why ſome are deaf, blind, &c. For though there be ſecond cauſes of theſe infirmities, decays and weakneſſes in humane bodies, yet all theſe are under the governance of the firſt cauſe, either ſet on work by God, or permitted in their motions by God; and this is as true alſo of the *Locomotive faculty*, the power in man or beaſts to move from one place to another for their food and diſpatch of buſineſs: for though it be the Soul that moveth, yet it is by vertue of a

power

power which God created in it to command the motion of the feet, for the moving of the whole body: and man moveth no longer, than this inward power or faculty is upheld by God; and his feet which are the Organs or inſtruments of motion, are kept in order free from diſlocation, or ruptures of joints or bones, or the incumbrances of troubleſome humours; the keeping of which freedom dependeth upon the influence of the Divine Power; and thus, *requiritur continuus tam verbi conſervatricis, quam creatricis influxus*, to preſerve man and beaſt, there is required as well a continual influence of the upholding-word, as the influence of the creating-word to give both man and beaſt a firſt being. So as *Raymundus de Sabunde* ſaith truly, *All creatures depend upon the Divine Power for their preſervation, as the beams of the Sun for their being depend upon the Sun, and the ſhadow upon the body.* I ſhall add no more to my Diſcourſe concerning this third Act of Providence, by which *God preſerveth both man and beaſt.*

ut radiorum eſſe a Sole, umbra a corpore: ita omnes creaturæ, a divinâ pendent conſervatione.

4. A fourth Act by which God preſerveth both man and beaſt, is *Gods diſcovering to his creatures the vertue of other creatures, with which he hath created them, for the amending, repairing, and recovering of the decays and diſorders to which their frail natures are ſubjected, and concurrence in the uſe and application of them: upholding the vertues in them in order to that end, and bleſſing the application of them. For the delivery of his creatures from diſeaſes and accidents to which they are ſubjected. Meſua* the great *Arabian* Doctor, is ſaid to have cried out, *That God alone doth heal ſickneſſes and diſeaſes.* God made man healthy, in the day wherein he was created, and moſt think he ſhould have continued ſo, if by his fall he had not diſordered the *craſis* or temperament of his bodily humours, corrupted the air, brought a curſe upon the Earth, which hath ever ſince brought forth as well *bryers and thorns* to prick and offend his fleſh, as *herbs and fruits* to increaſe and nouriſh it. Man is ſubject to a variety of *diſeaſes* in all parts of his body, from the predominance of humours, the ill affections of the air, of his food, &c. The *Heathens* had ſome notion of this: Their Elegant Poet cries out,

Solus Sanat languores Deus.

Audax Japete Genus
Ignem fraude malâ Gentibus intulit
Poſt ignem ætheriâ domo
Subductum macies, & nova febrium,
Terris in cubuit cohors, &c.

This

That was their Fiction; That one *Prometheus* ſtole fire from Heaven, which *Jupiter* had hid up, and diſtributed it amongſt men; whence he ſaith came ſickneſs, and a whole troop of agues, and fevers, and death. Faith makes a better diſcovery: it tells us man fell from the ſtate wherein he was created, loſt the Image of God, brake Covenant with him, and ſo became ſubject to ſickneſſes, unto death, &c. Yea, ſo ſubject are we, that if every one that falls ſick ſhould die, men eſpecially would fail from the Earth; but to prevent this, as God in the day when he made Heaven and Earth, created divers qualities in his creatures, by which they have a ſanative or healing vertue for various Diſeaſes: ſo his Providence is daily working, and daily ſeen in this thing, in two particulars:

1. *In diſcovering* to ſome of his creatures theſe hidden vertues. The Phyſitian indeed ſtudies, and makes experiments; and upon the exerciſe of his reaſon, and the demonſtrations he makes, directs the Apothecary to compound Medicines; but his God *inſtructeth him to this diſcretion*; and we may reaſonably ſo conclude, when we find the Prophet, *Iſaiah*, *ch.*27.*v.*29, affirming it concerning the diſcretion of the Threſher, *not threſhing the fitches, nor turning the Cart-wheel upon the Cummin*; and this is a work of daily Providence; as every day produceth new Methods of the Phyſitians practice, new Medicines and Compoſitions, &c.

2. Secondly, *In upholding the Vertues of* thoſe *herbs*, *roots*, &c. *that are made uſe of*, *in order to our healing*, *ſo as they have their effects in removing our diſtempers*, *and healing us*. The ſtrength of the body muſt be upheld, and the faculties by which it is enabled to take in, and apply, and retain the Medicine: and the vertues, faculties and powers alſo of the *drugs*, *herbs*, *plants*, *ſeeds*, &c. muſt be upheld alſo: both of them are by the mighty powerful concourſe and power of God: hence the Scripture attributeth our *healing* unto God; *I am the Lord that healeth you*, Exod. 15. 26. And the *Pſalmiſt* ſaith, *He healeth all our diſeaſes: I wound, and I heal*, Deut. 32. 39. Hence *Aſa* is rightly blamed for truſting in *Phyſitians more than in God*. Phyſicians are Gods *Ordinance*, they are to be uſed, but not to be truſted in. God muſt diſcover the healing-Medicine to them: God muſt uphold the healing-vertue in the Medicine when uſed by them, and the faculties alſo in their Patients, by which they muſt be inabled to take, uſe, and apply the Medicines they adminiſter And thus

now

now have I ſhewed you, how God by the ordinary workings of his Providence, every day worketh in the preſerving *man and beaſt*, conſider'd as Individuals.

5. But as in the production of things into being, notwithſtanding the ordinary rule and law of Nature generally obſerved, there are ſome *Anomalies* or *deviations*; ſo in the preſervings of the creature, in the workings of Divine Providence, God who will not be tracked in any of his ways, maketh ſome *Anomalies*, turns out of his ordinary road in ſome ſpecial caſes. Ordinarily he worketh by means natural, and to the Eye of Reaſon probable means: ſometimes he will do his work without means, or without ſuch apparent probable means, or, by what our Reaſon ſhall judg, quite contrary to the end: He will walk ſometimes in a natural courſe, ſometimes contrary to it; Theſe we call *Miraculous Acts of Divine Providence*. The Bodies of ſome of his people ſhall be ſometimes upheld a long time without *nouriſhment*, without *natural Reſt*, without *ſenſible breathing*; healed without proper applications of Phyſick. Many inſtances of which we have in the ſtory of the *Evangeliſts*, and of the *Acts of the Apoſtles*: but theſe are ertraordinary and *ſpecial*; and my buſineſs is not to diſcourſe thoſe workings of Providence which are unaccountable to us.

6. Laſtly, There is a *ſpecial providence of God* in *preſerving man*, that is yet further conſiderable by us. We have hitherto only conſidered the preſervation of *men* as *Individuals*, man conſidered as a ſingle perſon by himſelf. I muſt further conſider him as a *political creature*, involved in Society, and ſhew you the workings of *Divine Providence* in preſerving Bodies-Politick, and the Societies of men: and then (*3dly*, as a *ſpiritual creature*, capable of the Grace of God, and being made partaker of it. I ſhall conclude this Diſcourſe ſo far as I have already carried it on, with that ſaying of *Luther*: *If God watched not when I ſleep, if God did not defend and keep me when I am void of care, I ſhould die every moment, and every moment be loſing either an hand, or an Eye, or an Ear, or a Foot.* I ſhall further at this time only apply what part of this Diſcourſe concerning preſerving-Providence you have already heard.

Niſi vegitaret Deus, cum ego dormio niſi me defenderet & cuſtodiret cum ego ſim ſecurus fieret ut omni momento more &c. Luther.

Uſe 1. This in the firſt place may ſerve to give you a view of the immenſe and glorious Nature of God. Oh! that men would fear this great and dreadful Name of *the Lord our God*.

The Lord who preſerveth both man and beaſt! How great, how glorious muſt the God whom we ſerve, be, if what you have heard be true? But to open this a little in a few Particulars:

1. *It may ſatisfie you in that great truth of Gods Immenſity.* The *Schoolmen* ſay, God filleth the Heavens and the Earth, *& infinitum ultra Spatium*, an infinite ſpace beyond. The Scripture, *Jer.* 23. 24, ſaith. *Do not I the Lord fill Heaven and Earth?* It muſt needs be ſo. The Heavens and the Earth are creatures, and they are all full of living creatures. So are the great and wide Seas: all theſe creatures muſt breathe, be nouriſhed, reſt, grow, and increaſe, multiply their ſpecies, be renewed daily; they have all their ſeveral and various motions and operations: for theſe, they have powers, and faculties; all theſe (as you have heard) are upheld by God by the daily concourſe and influence of his Divine Providence; he muſt heal their diſeaſes, reſtore their lapſes and decays. How could all this be, if he were not every where filling it with his Eſſence, Preſence, and Power?

2. *Secondly*, From hence you may conclude, *The Activity of the Divine Eſſence.* You muſt not think that the great God is in any place, as a ſtone which indeed filleth the place, but moveth not, acteth nothing; He is in the World, (ſay the *Heathen* Philoſophers) as a Maſter of a ſhip, is in a ſhip, as a *Moderator*; as the Soul is in the Body, which is in every part of the Body, enlivening and actuating every part. God is *totus actus*, all Act. *He worketh* (ſaith our Saviour); *hitherto my Father worketh:* Take heed of making an Idol of God in your ſecret thoughts and apprehenſions of Him. Our fear of God, our love, our homage to him, will all be proportioned to our apprehenſions of him; it is therefore of great importance for Chriſtians to have right notions and apprehenſions of God, otherwiſe they will never glorifie him as God; and needs muſt his Being be an active working Being, if (as my Text ſaith) he preſerveth *man and beaſt.* They in all places have need of the Activity of God every hour, every moment.

3. *Thirdly*, This may teach you to apprehend the great God, as the *Pſalmiſt* doth deſcribe him, *Pſalm* 113. 5, 6, *Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high: who humbleth himſelf to behold the things that are in the Heavens, and in the Earth?* This

behold-

beholding is not an idle view, and beholding of them neither, as followeth there, *ver.* 7, *He raiſeth up the poor out of the duſt; and lifteth the needy out of the dunghil.* God is not in the world as a *King is in his Kingdom* only. A King is a body, that muſt occupy, and take up but one ſpace; there he is, and influenceth his dominions by his Laws, Edicts, and the miniſtry of inferiour Magiſtrates. But this *great Lord* is in all places, hath his hand in and upon every natural action. It is *Auguſtines* meditation: *Who* (ſaith he) *hath diſpoſed, and ſet in order, the members of the flea, and of the gnat, who hath given them life? Conſider but any little beaſt, what you will, who hath made them?* upon *Pſal.* 147. The uſual prejudice againſt this Doctrine in our thoughts is, that it ſeems to be an employment too low for the great God, to uphold the faculties of the meaner and more diſhonourable part of his creatures: but *Ambroſe* anſwers it well. If it were not beneath the honour of God to make them, it is not beneath his honour to uphold and preſerve them; in the mean time how doth God humble himſelf in theſe his acts of Providence? Who is like unto our God, who humbleth himſelf thus to behold, and look upon; to care for, and look to the meaneſt of his creatures?

Quis diſpoſuit membra culicis, & pulicis, ut habeant ordinem ſuum, & vitam ſuam? quis diſpoſuit iſta? quis fecit iſta? Aug.

4. But this Doctrine *ſhews us God admirable in nothing more than in his patience and long-ſuffering.* Hath any of us an appetite to our meat and drink, a power to digeſt and concoct it, it is the Lord that gives it: have we a power to move our tongue to ſpeak, our feet to walk, our body to any natural actions? all this is from the Lord, who is wonderful in working. Oh how patient is God with the drunkard, with the liar, the profane ſwearer, with all ſorts of ſinners, who uſe their bodies, or the ſeveral members and parts of them, to the profaning, abuſing, blaſpheming of his holy name; or in doing, or in order to the doing of any actions in the violation and contempt of his holy and righteous Laws. Why do they go on deſpiſing *the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance and long-ſuffering, not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth them to repentance? but after the hardneſs and impenitency of their hearts treaſure up unto themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Who will render unto every man according to his deeds,* Rom. 2. 3, 4, 5. Yea, and *the Lord is not ſlack, as ſome men count ſlackneſs, but is long-*

ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, 2 Pet. 3. 10. Thus far this Doctrine may inſtruct you concerning God.

Uſe 2. Secondly, It may *inſtruct us a little concerning our ſelves.* I remember the Pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* 139, 14. cries out, *I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Certainly every one of us may ſee reaſon to cry out, *O Lord! I am fearfully and wonderfully preſerved*; the truth is, none of us think upon it as we ought to do. If a man would ſit down, and think how many bones are in the body of a man, a diſlocation of any of which would make his life, without ſpeedy help, very uncomfortable to him; how many nerves, arteries, muſcles; how many parts, humours, &c. What offices they have, how many paſſages are in his body, how many ways they may be ſtopped, what faculties and powers are in theſe, how theſe are upheld to their due operations; and in them, how many things are noxious to, and at enmity with man; he would think the life, the health of every day almoſt a miracle, and cry out, *O Lord, I will praiſe thee*, for I am *fearfully and wonderfully preſerved:* we live by a miracle almoſt every hour. Study this, it will much contribute to your being *in the fear of the Lord all the day-long.* And that is the laſt uſe that I ſhall make of this diſcourſe, ſo far as I have carried it on.

Uſe 3. Learn here what an Argument this point affords.

1. *For the defaming of all ſin*, and diſobedience to the divine will.

2. *For the promoving of piety, indeed in all the parts of it.*

Firſt. How ſhould this *defame ſin* to every ingenuous ſoul, and that two ways. 1. *As it ſheweth it to be a moſt audacious daring of a juſt and holy God.* I remember a paſſage God uſeth to his ancient people the *Jews*, Hoſ. 2. 9, *She did not know that I gave her her corn, wine and oyl, which ſhe prepared for Baal; therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the ſeaſon thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedneſs*; and I will diſcover *her lewdneſs in the ſight of her lovers.* Doth the man who uſeth his tongue to lying, curſing, ſwearing, blaſpheming, reviling, know that it is God that upholdeth that faculty by which

which he ſpeaketh? Doth the glutton and the drunkard know that it is God that gives him an appetite, a power of concoction, and digeſtion, attraction, &c. Doth the ſinner know, that it is God who giveth him air to ſuck in, and a power to ſuck it in? doth he know that it is God who hath given him that hand, and a power to move that hand, which from the malice of his heart he ſtretcheth out to work iniquity? Oh! what a daring of an holy and righteous God muſt all ſinning with our bodily members be! Methinks the bold and daring ſinner ſhould think with himſelf theſe two things. 1. *That he who gave him theſe natural powers, can alſo at pleaſure take them away.* 2. That he can do it with the greateſt eaſe imaginable. It is but the withdrawing of this hand of Providence from us, our natural powers fail; our faculties are all loſt. When a man is uſing his tongue to lye to his neighbour, to curſe him, to ſwear profanely, and to blaſpheme God; methinks he ſhould thus think with himſelf, How eaſily can God ſtop my breath, withdraw that hand from my tongue which upholds my faculty to ſpeak. Methinks he ſhould remember the inſtance of *Ananias*, and *Saphira*, and *Zechariah* the father of *John the Baptiſt*, but for a few words of unbelief. When a man is ſtretching out his hand to work any iniquity, methinks he ſhould remember how eaſily God could do by him, as by *Jeroboam*, *When he ſtretched out his hand to lay hold of the Prophet*, and his hand preſently withered. If any of you lent your hand to one that were blind, or lame, and he ſhould ſpit in your face, revile you, &c. would not you think it a ſtrange daring of you? Oh! what a daring of an holy, juſt, and powerful God it is for a man wilfully and preſumptuouſly to uſe a member of his body, or a power, or faculty of his Soul, knowingly, and preſumptuouſly to ſin againſt God? Thus this Doctrine may ſerve to defame ſin to every ingenuous ſoul, as it neceſſarily muſt be an impudent daring of a juſt and holy God.

2. But it defameth it further, *As it ſpeaketh it an act of the higheſt ingratitude imaginable.* Ingratitude ſoundeth ill, very ill in the ears of humane nature; ſo ill, that an Heathen could ſay of it, *Call a man an ingrateful man, and you call him all that is naught:* it is a very great vice. Every ſinner muſt ſay, If God had not been ſo good to me, I had not been ſo evil againſt him. The Drunkard muſt ſay, If God had not aſſiſted

me to my natural action in drinking, I could not have diſhonoured him by that exceſs. The like muſt every ſinner ſay, the lyar, the ſwearer, the adulterer. God hath nothing to do with the obliquity of their action; but to the action ſo far forth as natural, his Providence aſſiſteth, upholding the natural faculties to their natural Operations. *And do you thus requite the Lord*, O fooliſh people? Is this your thankfulneſs to God for Gods aſſiſtance of you in the uſe of your faculties, for the neceſſary uſes of your life? I gave thee cloth, ſaith God, to cover thy nakedneſs, thou makeſt it to ſerve thy pride; my creatures to ſilence thy natural paſſions of hunger, and thirſt, and thou uſeſt it to ſerve thy Luxury. I gave thee a tongue to interpret thy mind to thy neighbour, and to praiſe me, and I aſſiſt thee in the natural uſe of it: thou uſeſt it to ſwear, curſe, to blaſpheme my great and ſacred name. I gave thee an hand, and aſſiſt thee in the uſe of it, that thou mayeſt get bread, and do the works of thy calling in order thereunto: thou uſeſt it to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs, to perſecute and oppreſs my people. Thus the ſinner turneth the gifts of God into weapons with which he fighteth againſt him. I remember a quite contrary reſolution in holy *David*, Pſal. 116, *I will* (ſaith he) *take the cup of ſalvation, and praiſe the Lord.* I know, that *Poculum ſalutis* is capable of other interpretations, which are alſo given according to the various fancies of Interpreters. But why may not we interpret it thus? *I will take that very mercy which thou haſt ſhewed me*, and uſe it, and improve it for thy honour and glory. Certainly thus we ought to do as *Hannah*, 1 Sam. 1. did by her child *Samuel*, which ſhe had begged and received of God. She takes her child, and at the return of the year carrieth him up to *Hieruſalem*, and ſaith, *For this child I prayed, and the Lord heard me; hath given me my Petition which I asked of him: Therefore alſo I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he ſhall be lent unto the Lord.* But of this more under the next head; to which I now come, to ſhew you how far what you have heard may be uſeful. 2. *To promove piety*, and that both in the internal and external acts of it, in the more immediate acts of homage, which we are to pay to God, and in all the duties of an holy and pious converſation before men, in obedience to the will of God. It is not hard to underſtand upon this *hypotheſis*,

that God doth thus concur in the aſſiſtance of all our natural faculties, in order to the preſerving of us, how reaſonable it is, that we ſhould be *in the fear of the Lord all the day long*; That we ſhould live in an exerciſe of faith, truſt and dependency upon him; That we ſhould love the Lord at all times. And for acts of more external immediate homage, *prayer* and *praiſe*, &c. How reaſonable a thing is *prayer* morning and evening; doeſt thou not remember it is God that muſt concur to give thee ſleep in the night, a power to breath, to move, to work, to eat, to drink, &c. and give me leave to tell you, if you do not think the ſleep of the night, or a ſtrength to labour in the day, an appetite to thy meat, a power to digeſt it, a liberty and power to breath, mercies worth the asking; it is becauſe thou haſt not wanted them much: will you not every day have need of the uſe of your ſenſes, your hands, your tongue, your feet, your ears, &c? do not you think them mercies worth the asking? Go to the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, and thoſe that lye on ſick-beds, and enquire of them; they will better inſtruct you in the value of theſe things. Do not you know what to pray for ſo often? this Doctrine will ſhew you in part; pray that God would preſerve your life and being, uphold your powers and faculties, &c. And *Praiſe* is as reaſonable as Prayer; you are every day fearfully and wonderfully preſerved. By whoſe power is it, as *Peter* and *James* ſaid to the people when they had cured the lame man? *Not by our* power, but by the *power of Jeſus of Nazareth* doth this man walk. So give me leave to tell you, it is not by your own power, nor by the meer vertue of your own faculties, with which you are born, that you ſleep, walk, diſcourſe, work, but by the mighty power of God concurring and aſſiſting thoſe faculties. Particularly, you may hence conclude the reaſonableneſs of that Religious cuſtom, (which ſome have bruitiſhly caſt off) begging a bleſſing upon your meat at meals, and giving thanks after receit of it.

Laſtly, Certainly this Meditation well digeſted, cannot but highly promove *all manner of practical holineſs*. For what is holineſs, but the obedience of the members of our bodies and powers, and faculties of our Souls to the Will of God, the exerciſe of them all according to the Divine Rule, and the end for which

which he gave them to us; and what can be more perſwaſive to this, than for us to hear, that as God hath given theſe powers, ſo God upholdeth them in exerciſe; in him we live, by him every member we have moves, and we are all kept in being: may I not therefore with the Apoſtle conclude, *Rom.* 12. 1, *I beſeech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you preſent your bodies as a living ſacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reaſonable ſervice.* It is reaſonable that he who hath given you the Sacrifice, ſhould ſmell the ſweet ſavour of it. He hath provided the ſacrifice for you; He hath provided it for that end, to be a ſacrifice for him; it is therefore but a *reaſonable Service.* It is reaſonable that he who *planteth a Vineyard*, who *dreſſeth, keepeth*, and *preſerveth it every day*, ſhould have ſome of the fruit thereof. Which *of you planteth a Vineyard*, an *Orchard*,&c. and *eateth not of the fruit thereof?* But I ſhall add no more to this firſt part of my Diſcourſe, concerning Gods preſerving *Providence.*

CHAP.

SERMON VII.

Pſal. XXXVI. 6.

——O Lord! thou preſerveſt man and beaſt.

I AM diſcourſing concerning the firſt mentioned great Act of Providence, in the *Preſervation* both of man and beaſt, *Upholding all things by the word of his power.* I ſhewed you in my laſt Diſcourſe, by what particular acts, God preſerveth *individuals* of all kinds. But *Man*, is to be conſidered yet in two notions further: Man is ζῶον πολίτικον, a ſociable, a political creature; and ſo as one of a multitude, formed into political bodies, called by the names of *Kingdoms*, *Commonwealths*, &c. He is further to be conſidered, as a *ſpiritual creature*; capable of Divine Grace, and divers ſpiritual Habits, things which *accompany ſalvation*, and make him *fit for the Kingdom of God*, and preparing him for that bleſſed Eternity, which is the end of our hopes. Theſe alſo muſt be upheld, and maintained by the power of Providence; *We are* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *kept by the power of God through faith to ſalvation*, 1 Pet. 1. 5. My laſt Diſcourſe ſhewed you no more than the particular workings of Divine Providence, in preſerving and upholding the *natural world*. Let me now ſhew you the workings of it, in preſerving and upholding the *Political*, and *Spiritual* World. I begin with the former, and ſo the preſerving Providence of God worketh ſeveral ways. 1. *In diſpoſing the minds of all people unto Government.* There are indeed ſome Anomalies here, ſome ſons of *Belial* in all places, that will endure no yoke, but generally it is not ſo. And the minds of men are diſpoſed to order and Govern-

ment;

ment; without Government Polities could not stand, the World would quickly be in confusion; there can be no order without *Governours*, and governed. Governours must be spirited for the exercise of Government, and the Governed must be spirited for *obedience*. Both these are from the Lord, who is *wonderful in working*. Every one is not fit to govern; he hath not parts for it, he hath not a spirit for it. Some are like *Issachar*, fit for nothing but to *couch under the burthen*. Others like *Judah*, who have hands fit to be *upon the necks of their Enemies, and their fathers children shall bow down before them*.

1. God by his Providence *influenceth some for the exercise of Government*, either from the womb, or from the time they are called to that exercise, as it is said of *Saul*, 1 Sam. 10. 9, when *Samuel* had anointed him to be King over *Israel*, *God gave him another heart*. Every man hath not a spirit of Government; there is much goeth to the making up of that spirit. It was prophecied of Christ, *Isa.* 9. 6, That *the Government should be upon his shoulders*. And *Isa.* 11. 2, *The Spirit shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom, and understanding, the spirit of counsel, and might, the spirit of knowledg, and fear of the Lord*. A spirit of knowledg, and of the fear of the Lord is necessary to a religious Government. A spirit of understanding and wisdom; a *spirit of counsel, and might*, is necessary for a good *civil Government*. *Joshua* the Son of *Nun*, was full of *the spirit of wisdom*, Deut. 34 9. Every man in a Kingdom, or a City, or Commonwealth, hath not knowledg, and understanding, nor wisdom, and counsel, nor might, and courage fit for Government: God giveth it only to some persons, whom he designeth to rule over men. And herein is the Providence of God mightily seen, and that both in Hereditary Kingdoms and States, and in those also which are Elective: 1. In *such as are hereditary*: ordinarily the sons of Princes are not like other men, though under equal circumstances of Education. When *Gideon* asked *Zeba* and *Zalmunna*, Judg. 8. 18, *What manner of men they were that they killed?* They answered him thus, *As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a King*: There is something that ordinarily appears in the faces of Princes, more of *Majesty* than in other men, which shews another spirit. I know that this is not universal; there have been Princes in the World of mean parts, courage, &c. which ordinarily happens when God hath a quarrel

quarrel with a people, *Eccl.* 10. 16,17, *Wo to thee, O Land, when thy King is a child, and thy Princes eat in the morning: Bleſſed art thou, O Land, when thy King is the ſon of Nobles, and thy Princes eat in due ſeaſon, for ſtrength, and not for drunkenneſs.* 2. It is much ſeen in *Elective governments.* God by his Providence directeth, and diſpoſeth the Electors to the choice of ſuch perſons as he hath prepared with ſuch a ſpirit; or (except in caſes where God hath a deſign by unworthy Governours to chaſtiſe a ſinful people) when they are choſen, he giveth unto them ſuch a ſpirit, and by his extraordinary Providence correcteth the errours of thoſe that chooſe them to that employment. This is a wonderful working of Divine Providence. We often ſee perſons in Government, ſhewing quite another ſpirit and temper than they before appear'd to us to have. Nor is the Providence of God leſs ſeen in diſpoſing the ſpirits of the *Governed*; That thouſands, yea millions of people ſhould conſent to a ſubjection to one chief Ruler (as in a Monarchy) or to the Government of a few (as in Commonwealths), and be willing to be ruled and governed by him, or them: yet this we ordinarily ſee. It is the Lords doing, and it ſhould be marvellous in our eyes: and it would be ſo, if we would but be ſo conſiderate as to think of the variety of mens humours, fancies and paſſions. Sometimes indeed God in judgment againſt a people, ſuffers a perverſe ſpirit to mingle it ſelf with the governed; there are rebellions, and mutinies, yet thoſe for the moſt part are originated in oppreſſion and violence. But ſuppoſing no errours in Governonrs, that yet multitudes of people ſhould be ſo willingly ſubject (and yet few of them for conſcience ſake) muſt needs come from the Lords influence, who is wonderful in the working for the preſerving of the Politick Societies of men, which without a Political order or Government could not ſtand.

2. *Secondly*, God *preſerveth* men in their *Political Societies, by directing them to make, and to agree in Laws proper for their Government; as to this he upholdeth the reaſon of Legiſlators.* Laws are the rules of Government. 1. *God hath given unto men a Divine Law* for a Copy; the Book of this, the King of *Iſrael* was always to have before him, and he was to read in it all the days of his life, *Deut.* 17. 19. *Joſ.* 1. 8. The Divine Law concerns ſome generals; but there muſt be many particular Laws, reſpecting the complexions of ſeveral Kingdoms and bodies of

people: In the making of which the *Providence of God*, and his influence is wonderfully seen, upholding the reason of the Lawmakers to the making of such Laws as are necessary and expedient, and proper for the government of such a people. It is true, as the *Hebrew Doctors* were wont to say, *That the Spirit of God did not always touch the hearts of the Prophets*; so neither *doth the Spirit of God always touch and direct the hearts of Legislators*. God suffereth sometimes the wisdom of the wise to fail them: impious and wicked Laws, foolish and insignificant Laws may sometimes be made, to which it were blasphemy to intitle God in any efficient causation. God will by these instances let us see men are but men; but yet there is such an ordinary influence of Divine Providence, that although some Kingdoms and Commonwealths in a Superfoetation of Laws may have some wicked and impious, others foolish and insignificant; yet they are not deficient in such as are necessary to maintain Justice, and preserve civil order and peace. Now although we must by no means intitle God to the wicked effects of men (which he only permits), nor to the follies and impertinencies of men: yet he is justly to be entitled to the wise and prudent effects of his creatures; for good useful and necessary Laws they are from the Lord, who is wise in counsel, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. If the Plowman be instructed by God with discretion, and taught, and the *Thresher* be instructed, as to the discretion he useth, by *the Lord of Hosts*, who is *wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working* (which the Prophet asserteth, *Isa.* 28. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.) Then certainly the hearts of those who are instructed to the making of Rules for the Government of the great bodies of his people, are instructed also from the Lord, who is great in Wisdom, and wonderful in Counsel. And herein is the mighty Power and Wisdom of God seen, in the preservation of Political Societies.

3. A third thing wherein the Providence of God is seen in the preserving of these Societies, is, *In the ordinary silencing of those passions in men, which disorder and disturb all Government*. We justly look upon it as a merciful piece of Divine Providence, to conceal from some beasts of great use in our lives their own strength, which if known to them, would make them our masters. The multitude in any Polity is as an unruly beast, and all Governments are preserved by their ignorance of their

own

own ſtrength, and the bridle of Divine Providence, by which God keeps them in and ſilenceth their paſſions, which if let looſe, would quickly turn all into a tumult and confuſion. The Individuals of all Societies are full of boiſterous and brutiſh paſſions; ſo as a conſiderate man when he looketh upon ſuch a City as this, or any other great Political Body, and conſidereth how many perſons are in it of unruly tempers and paſſions, who either know not the rules of natural Juſtice and Equity; or if they know any thing of them, their luſts and paſſions will not ſuffer them to live in any juſt obſervance of them; will ſee reaſon to wonder how people of ſuch heterogeneous tempers and different paſſions, ſhould ever live together a year, or a month, in peace and any degrees of order: nor is there any thing which holds them together but the wonderful influence of Divine Providence, ſilencing their paſſions, and reſtraining thoſe luſts in men, which otherwiſe would ſet any Kingdom, City or Nation on a fire, and bring it quickly to an heap of rubbiſh and confuſion. It was ſaid of old, that in the degenerate ſtate of man, *Homo homini lupus*, one man is a Wolf to another, and nothing but the Divine Hand keeps them from biting and devouring each other; the Lord by his *Providence* holds them in as the *Horſe* and the *Mule* with *bit and bridle*. When God thinks fit for the puniſhment of perſons or Nations but a little to let looſe the Reins, we ſee what brutiſh paſſions do diſcover themſelves in men; what *envy*, *malice*, *revenge*, *oppreſſion*, and other luſts and vices directly tending to deſtroy Societies. So as we are only preſerved becauſe theſe diſorders are but fits of diſtemper, not abiding diſeaſes in the bodies of people; and the reaſon why they are no more is from Gods reſtraining influence upon unruly turbulent ſpirits: *He that ruleth the raging of the Sea, and ſtilleth the waves thereof when they ariſe*, ruleth alſo the paſſions of men, keeps them generally ſtill, and ſtilleth them if at any time they riſe to any exorbitant heighth: 'tis the ſame power that doth them both: *Pſalm* 65.7, *Thou ſtilleſt the noiſe of the Sea, the noiſe of its waves, and the tumults of the people.* It is God that ſaith, *Be ſtill, O ye inhabitants of the Iſlands:* Whence is it but from this, that there are ſo few *murthers*, *rapes*, &c. no more *thefts* and *acts* of *Violence?* We ſee the fear of puniſhment will not reſtrain them, as ſoon as God but takes off his reſtraint from them; and the conſideration how unreaſonable multitudes appear in their fits of diſorder, is enough

to convince men, that the general tie of people have not reaſon enough to be a law unto themſelves, but are meerly governed and over-ruled by the *influence* of Gods reſtraint upon them, for the preſervation of his people in their political Societies.

4. A fourth thing wherein the power of *Divine Providence* is eminently ſeen in the *preſervation of Men*, in their *Political Societies, is in diſcovering the ſecret devices, and conſpiracies of men, tending to the diſturbance and diſſolution of Government* in the places where they live: I ſtill underſtand this in *ordinary cauſes*. When God hath a deſign to puniſh a *Senacherib*, he ſuffers the plottings of his own ſons to take effect againſt him. God ſometimes puniſheth *Rulers*: ſometimes he puniſheth People by ſuch ſufferances, but ordinarily he doth not. You have an hundred Treaſons diſcovered, for one that takes effect. Here I might enlarge ſtrangely, how God brings to light thoſe hidden works of darkneſs, wherein the welfare of States and Kingdoms are concerned. *Solomon* therefore gives good counſel, *Eccleſ.* 10. 20, *Curſe not the King in thy thoughts, nor the rich* (that is, the Ruler I conceive) *in thy Bedchamber: for a bird of the air ſhall carry the voice, and that which hath wings ſhall tell the matter*; that is, it ſhall be diſcovered *ſtrangely* and *ſwiftly*. What eminent inſtances of Divine Providence of this nature we had in our own Nation, eſpecially in the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, and the beginning of King *James* his reign.

1. Sometimes *God ſetteth their own Conſciences on work, and they ſhall betray and diſcover themſelves*; before they fall to their work, God ſmiteth one of their Conſciences, and they come and diſcover their Complices and confeſs their own errours: how often have we had this in our own ſtory? 2. Sometimes their *Countenances ſhall betray them*, while they are juſt ready to ſtrike the fatal ſtroke. 3. Sometimes *a terror ſhall ſeize* them, and their Daggers ſhall drop out of their hands. 4. Sometimes their *own Letters* ſhall deſtroy them (of which we had an eminent inſtance in the *Powder-Treaſon*, hatched by Papiſts in this Nation); ſometimes the powder ſhall not take fire: another time it ſhall miſs the mark. The Monſters are ſometimes brought to the birth, and the parents of them want a ſtrength to bring forth. How often was Queen *Elizabeth* in this Nation ſo preſerved to fulfil the word of the Lord? *Job* 5. 12, *He diſappointeth the devices of the crafty, ſo that their hands cannot perform their enterpriſe.*

5. A fifth thing I ſhall inſtance in, is *Gods defeatings of the*

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counſels of *Ahitophels*. All men are not alike in wiſdom and counſel: God fitteth ſome more eminently, who are to have ſtations in the publick Government and Councils of a Nation. Amongſt theſe, ſome are men of integrity and ſincerity, men of publick ſpirits and deſigns, who uſe all their wits, parts and abilities, for the general good and proſperity of people. Others are men of more private ſpirits, driving ſelfiſh deſigns; and theſe oft-times are men of great craft and ſubtilty, whoſe counſels yet, ſhould they take effect, would ruin the body politick, which they pretend to ſerve, whiles they ſerve but their own bellies, or families, or the luſts of ſome others in order to that end. Here now the Providence of God is often ſeen, in *defeating their counſels*, and that various ways: Sometimes by making them *unacceptable*, as was in the caſe of *Ahitophel*: his counſels ordinarily, were taken and followed as Oracles; but God makes the counſel of *Huſhai*, though (as appeareth by the ſtory, a friend at firſt ſuſpected by *Abſolom*) to be more accepted. Sometime God doth it by ſome more extraordinary ways, as in the caſe of *Haman*, who had both given counſel, and obtained a decree againſt the *Jews*. The King ſhall not ſleep, but ſpend his waking times, reading the book of the Chronicles; there he ſhall fall upon the place where a record is of the good ſervice *Mordecai* had done. The King ſhall miſtake *Haman*'s Courtſhip to the Queen, while he is making ſuit to the Queen for his life, for an attempt to force her: Thus *Haman* ſhall be defeated in his deſigns, and it ſhall be his own lot to be hanged upon the Gallows which he had prepared for *Mordecay*: nor are theſe the only inſtances. There is no Kingdom, no Age, in which obſerving perſons will not obſerve ſome inſtance or other of this nature, for the preſervation of the Political ſocieties of men.

Sixthly, *The power of divine Providence in preſerving Political ſocieties, is eminently ſeen in ballancing and diverting oppoſite powers.* It is wonderful to obſerve how God ballanceth one Nation againſt another; ſometimes by *natural ſcituation*, ſometimes by *voluntary aſſociations*. We in *England* are an inſtance of the former. All the Kingdoms about us are larger and more mighty than we are; *France*, *Spain*, &c. far more populous. God hath ballanced us with them by our ſcituation. We are an *Iſland*, we are powerful in Shipping, they cannot march an army by land againſt us: that keeps us at ſome proportion with them, and from being a prey to them, often gaping

ping for us. Others God hath ſcituated in Countries full of Rocks, and Mountains, and Waters; by which natural Fortifications they are ballanced with the far greater fleſhly power of their Enemies. Thus God preſerved his people in *Epirus* from the overflowing flood of the Turkiſh Power: In *Holland*, from the attempts of the *Spaniard* 40 years together, a Nation far more great and mighty than they. Thus he hath preſerved his Church, his little flock in the Valleys of *Piedmont* and *Lucerne*. As *Solomon* ſaith, becauſe the *Conies are a feeble people, they have their habitation in the Rocks:* So where God hath had a little people, a feeble people, his Providence hath for their habitation allowed them the natural defences of mountains, and the inacceſſible paths of Rocks. Others he ballanceth with the far greater power of their adverſaries, by voluntary confederacies and conſociations: were they ſingly to be encountred, they would quickly be ſwallowed up; but they join in league with others, and ſo make a proportion to their Potent Adverſaries. Some he ballanceth by giving them a more extraordinary ſtrength, ſpirit, courage; that one will chaſe ten, and ten an hundred, and an hundred a thouſand, and a thouſand ſhall put ten thouſand of their Enemies in flight. Some are ſtronger in Land-forces, but weak as to Naval-forces; others ſtrong in Naval-forces, but weaker in Land-forces: till the period of a Nation comes (for Nations have their periods) he ballanceth all Political Societies one way or other, according to the variety of his infinite wiſdom. 2. Another way is by *Diverſion*; you have many inſtances of this in Scripture. How often hath God thus preſerved us in *Europe*, from the overflowing flood of the *Turks*, by ſtirring up the *Perſians* to invade him, by ſuffering rebellions amongſt tho e that are his own Subjects. But I ſhall contract this diſcourſe, much will fall into my following diſcourſe of Governing Providence.

7. The laſt thing which I ſhall inſtance in, wherein the Providence of God is ſeen in the preſerving of men in their Political Societies, is, *in giving unto men wiſdom, and diſpoſing of them to ſeveral Arts, Trades, Myſteries, and Occupations, by which they become mutually ſerviceable one to another, and contribute to the upholding the ſocieties in which they live.* Here are two things, in both which, the Providence of God is eminent to every eye which wiſtly obſervethit. There is nothing more evident than that there is a variety

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of Arts, Myſteries, Trades, and Occupations uſeful for man, by ſome of which he is ſupplied with things neceſſary for food and rayment; by others of them, with things for delight and ornament: both the one and the other, if not neceſſary for individuals, yet are neceſſary for preſerving a Polity conſiſting of multitudes.

Now, 1. *The wiſdom, by which men work in theſe ſeveral Arts, Myſteries, and Occupations, and by which men follow theſe ſeveral Trades, is from the Lord.* The Prophet *Iſaiah* tells us, the diſcretion of the Plow-man, and of the Threſher is from him. *God called by name* Bezaliel, *the Son of* Uri, *and he was filled with the Spirit of God, in wiſdom, and in underſtanding, and in knowledg, and in all manner of workmanſhip: and to deviſe curious works, to work in gold, in ſilver, and in braſs: And in cutting of ſtones, to ſet them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work*, Exod. 35. 31, 32, 33, 34. and it is ſaid, that God filled him and *Aholiab with wiſdom of heart to work all manner of work of the engraver, and of the cunning workman; and of the embroiderer, in blue, purple, and in ſcarlet, and in fine linnen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and deviſe any cunning work*, v. 35.

2. The Providence of God in this thing is eminently diſcerned, in *diſpoſing men to theſe ſeveral employments.* So that as in the natural body, there are ſeveral members, and every member is inclined, and naturally diſpoſed to its particular office; by which the ſeveral uſes and neceſſities of the body-natural are ſupplied. So in bodies politick, as there is a great variety of members, ſo the ſeveral members of it are, by the wiſe Providence of God, diſpoſed and inclined to the learning and practice of ſeveral Arts and Sciences, Trades and Occupations; by which, the uſes of the whole are ſupplied, as well as the ſeveral individuals in the Society enabled to get themſelves a ſubſiſtence, yet in the ſervice of the publick: This is a great piece of Divine Providence. One man is diſpoſed to huſbandry; unleſs ſome were ſo diſpoſed, however ſlaviſh and dirty the employment be, the Nation could not be fed: others to the making of Cloaths, and Stuffs, and Linnens; if none were ſo diſpoſed, though the whole might be fed, they could not be cloathed. One works in iron and braſs for more neceſſary uſes; another in gold and ſilver for Ornaments, and more fine and delicate uſes. One man is diſpoſed to ſtudy Phyſick, Law, Divinity, and cannot endure hard labour: another is of a more ſlaviſh and ſervile diſpoſition, no ways diſpoſed to learning and ſtudies: All this is from the

the Lord, and by this working of his Providence, the uses of all are supplied, and so *Political* Societies are by this means preserved. We have now considered man, 1. In his single and individual capacity: And. 2. In his *Social* and *Political capacity*; and shewn you several acts of Divine Providence, by which God, in either, preserveth him. But we have yet a third capacity to consider him in, that is, his *spiritual capacity*, as a creature possessed of the *grace of God*, the Grace of *Justification*, and the Grace of *Sanctification*. As to this he is in a peculiar sense *Gods creature*, often, by Saint *John*, said to *be born of God*: and as to this likewise he is *preserved by God*, 1 Pet. 1. 5, *You are kept by the power of God, through faith to salvation*. Indeed, a discourse upon this properly belongs to the *specialties of Providence*, of which, I may possibly hereafter speak distinctly; but not knowing whether I shall reach to that, something (though more shortly and generally) I shall speak to it here. Grace in the Soul of a man, or woman, is a noble creature, and one of those things that are upheld by the mighty power of God. Now that which I have to do is to consider, *How the Providence of God worketh in upholding this noble creature in those individual souls*, into which he hath breathed this breath of spiritual life. Let me shew you this in a few particulars.

1. God preserveth man in his spiritual life and capacity, *by a daily repeating to him his gracious acts, in the pardon of sin, and reckoning of Christs righteousness to him*. It hath been a Question betwixt *Arminians*, *Papists*, and *Calvinists*, *Whether there can be an intercision of the state of Justification?* Whether a soul once justified can again be not justified? We say No. *The gifts and callings of God are without repentance*; *whom he loveth he loveth to the end*: Well, but how can this be? *for who liveth and sinneth not? The righteous falleth seven times in a day*. If Justification be not repeated, how can a soul be justified? We say, Though the *state* abide, yet Gods gracious acts are repeated. Sin *is not pardoned before it is committed*; but when commited, it is pardoned by a repetition of an act of Grace. Justification speaks a state; this is not repeated: but *remission of sin*, is an act of Grace frequently repeated; and *the imputing of Christs righteousness* is an act often repeated. We are not daily created or born, as to our natural life, but we are daily preserved: so God puts the believer once into a *state of Justification*, that abides and faileth not; but we should fall from it every day, did not God continue us in it, by the repetition of these gracious

gracious acts. We need a continual pardoning, a continual imputation of the righteousness of Christ, to preserve our spiritual life, as we need continual acts of Providence to preserve and to uphold our souls in their natural life. Thus every day *it is God that justifieth.*

2. God preserveth *his Church* and *particular souls*, as to their spiritual life, by a daily *infusion of those habits of grace, which are necessary in those souls that are ordained unto life, as the principles of those operations by which they must attain this life, and by increasing these habits in them.* In a word, by perfecting, 1. *The number of his Saints.* 2. *By perfecting their graces.* The first respecteth the collective body of his Church, and is called in Scripture, *an adding to the Church such as shall be saved; a working of faith in all them that are ordained unto eternal salvation:* without this the Church of God must perish, and fail from the earth in a short time. Gods people are mortal, even as others. Now God so ordereth it in his Providence, that there is a succession. One generation of believers passeth, another cometh; and thus God hath a seed kept alive in the Earth. 2. God also doth it as to individuals, by a daily *infusion of gracious habits*, further strengthening and quickening them to their spiritual operations, *Phil.* 4. 13, *I can do all things* (saith the Apostle) *through Christ that strengtheneth me:* believers, *Eph.* 3. 16, *are strengthened with might by his Spirit.* God upholdeth his own seed in the soul, and bloweth up the sparks which himself hath kindled.

3. *Gods Providence in the preservation of men in their spiritual capacity, is seen, in the upholding and maintaining his word and ordinances, upon which the souls of his people live.* As the body liveth by bread, as to its natural capacity; so the soul liveth by the word of God, as to its spiritual capacity. *By these things men live* (saith *Hezekiah*). I know some interpret that passage concerning *afflictions:* but others concerning the *promises.* Now the Providence of God hath been, and is eminently seen, in maintaining of his word; the written word, the word preached; in taking care that his people have had a succession of Ministers. Before the Books of *Moses* were written, God provided for the souls of his people by a word not written: since, by a written word, and that most eminently, since the whole Scripture was written, since which time *Prophecy*; and unwritten *Revelations* are much ceased, not further to be expected. God may yet reveal himself to some parti-

cular servants of his: but we are not to expect such Revelations, nor are they the object of faith. Now herein hath the stupendous Providence of God been eminently seen; that when so many thousand books wrote since the Scriptures were written, are lost, and there is no memorial almost of them; and the Scriptures have had more enemies than any of them, more that have endeavoured to corrupt them, and to destroy them; yet God hath preserved this storehouse of spiritual food, and kept it from corruption by the extraordinary care of the *Jewish* Church; the multiplying of translations, guiding and governing of those who have been employed in them: Nor hath the Providence of God been less seen in maintaining Ministers and Teachers of his word. In the *Jewish* Church, when the ordinary officers failed, and were corrupted, God from time to time raised them up Prophets, who were his extraordinary Embassadors to teach his people. In Christs time, he calls Fishermen to the Apostleship: and in all succeeding Ages, though there have been sometimes more, sometimes fewer able, and faithful Ministers; yet God hath so ordered, that there never have wanted some, and a competent number to break the bread of life, and to feed his people with wisdom, and with spiritual understanding. No sort of men have been more maligned, hated, persecuted, yet God hath upheld the order, and taken care for the souls of his people, that they have continually had faithful stewards of the mysteries of God.

4. The Providence of God is admirable in preserving man in his spiritual capacity, in the daily *influence of his Spirit attending his word*, and *sanctifying his institutions*. The word is in it self but a dead letter; the Preaching of the word is far from a mean adequate to so great an effect as is the conversion and edification of souls: God is therefore pleased to join his quickening spirit to the word, where he pleaseth, blessing and sanctifying it. I am not of their judgment, who think that there is such a constant concurrence and influence of the Spirit with the preaching of the Gospel, that if men will do what in them lies, they may repent, believe, &c. I know no Scripture which will justifie that notion; but certain it is, that the holy Spirit doth ordinarily join it self with the preaching of the word, like the wind blowing where it pleaseth, and none knoweth the motion of it, convincing men *of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*.

5. Lastly, The Providence of God preserveth men in their spiritual

ritual capacities, *by supplying them with strength and succour against their spiritual enemies*; their own flesh, the world, the Devil; all which with a variety of temptations strike at our spiritual welfare. But this is much of kin to what I said before. I shall add no more to this discourse concerning Gods Act of Providence, as in the preservation of beasts, so of men, and that in their single natural capacities; In their Social and Political capacities, and finally in their Spiritual capacities. I shall only add some few words of application.

This in the first place may inform us, *How great that God must necessarily be whom we serve*; he is the Creator of the ends of the Earth, of the Heavens, of the Seas, of all things, and it is he who *preserveth both man and beast:* he preserveth all men in their single and natural capacities; this I opened before. *He preserveth* all men in their *Political capacities*, all his people in their *Spiritual capacities*. It is an ordinary observation in the Kingdoms and Empires of the world, that when they have grown to a great bigness, they have perished with their own bulk and weight. No Monarch hath been found sufficient to preserve them by his wisdom and Counsels. And I remember the Historian speaks of it to the great honour, and as a wonderful thing, in one of the first *Roman* Kings, that he put the *Roman* Kingdom (it was no more then) into such an order, that it was governed as if it had been but one Family. But how much doth it speak the Glory and Majesty, the Immensity and Omnipresence, the Efficiency and Activity of God, who at the same time is working over all the Earth, in all the Empires and Kingdoms, in all the Cities and Towns in it, defeating *Ahitophels*, discovering Plots and Conspiracies, ruling the spirits of unruly men; so as the whole Universe is kept in order: and the thousands and ten thousands of men in it, that know not the yoke of Reason and Religion, are yet bridled by his Providence, and kept in some just order and decorum, and made, in stead of running one upon another, and destroying one another, mutually to be subservient one to another? I say, how great? how wise? how infinite? how glorious in power must this God be? *Use* 1.

Secondly, *Observe how much mercy passeth over our heads, which we do take little or no notice of:* We are *fearfully and wonderfully preserved*, and that in every capacity. I shewed you it before as *Use* 2.

to our *natural capacity*, few think of that; what a strange working of Providence there must be to keep our souls in life but one day: It is as much remarkable in our *Political capacity*. I remember, when Christ sent out his Disciples to Preach, he told them, That *he sent them out as lambs amongst wolves*. It is true indeed, not only of *Gospel-Preachers*, but of all sober and vertuous men, that would live in the world but according to the Laws of *Reason* and *Moral vertue*. They are in the world as lambs amongst wolves: Let but any one consider how many lewd, unrighteous, debauched men are in all places, such whose only rule is their lusts: how full the world is of men that make no conscience of murthers, rapes, thefts, oppression, and other enormities, and then stand and wonder at the Providence of God, that in any part of the world there is any thing of order and decorum observed, that men have any thing which they can call their own, that the lives of Princes or sober people are secured. What can it be attributed to, but the mighty power of Divine Providence, that we have no more murthers, rapes, thefts, &c. we see laws, punishments will not restrain all, nor the same men at all times; how, or whence is it, that they restrain any, or at any time? I will conclude this with what the Psalmist so often maketh the foot in that his admirable song of Providence, *Psal.* 107, *Oh! that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men!* Oh that Princes would praise the Lord for his goodness! It is by him that they reign, that they have a days liberty to decree justice; by him that the Counsels of *Ahitophel* are defeated, the conspiracies of ungodly men are discovered; that the spirits of unruly and unreasonable men are subdued under them: by him that they have wisdom to make Laws, and liberty to execute them: that men in their dominions are disposed into their several orders, ranks and stations, so as mutually to serve one another, and to uphold the whole. Oh *that Subjects would praise the Lord for his goodness!* that they have wise Magistrates, good Laws, that their lives are not Sacrificed to murtherers, that their houses are not fired, that their Wives and Virgins are not ravished, that they are disposed to Trades and Occupations: that they have wisdom for them, a spirit to them. Let every Citizen, every Subject, see and acknowledg the hand of the Lord in these things, and bless his holy name.

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But lastly, Let the *Redeemed of the Lord*, particularly, *see and acknowledg the Providence of God*, in the preserving of them in their spiritual capacities. Were it not for the *preserving Providence of God*, our spiritual life would be extinguished every moment: God preserveth it by repeating his Gracious Acts in the remission of our sins, in the imputation of Christs righteousness. Our habits of grace would weaken: we are preserved and kept by the *power of God through faith unto salvation.* It is a great mercy, and deserves a great acknowledgment, that we have our lives preserved, our estates preserved, our wives and daughters preserved. But oh! how much greater is it, that we have our state of Justification maintained? Our principles of Spiritual Operations, our habits of Grace, our power to repent, believe, love God, preserved; that the influences of Grace are continued, that we have the Word and Ordinances preserved. *Let the redeemed of the Lord* say, *his mercy endureth for ever*; let them adore preserving-Providence: let them consider what a subtil adversary they have, *Who goeth about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour.* What abundance of lusts and corruptions they have in their own hearts; what a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds; and they will say, that the seed of God, which is in them, is wonderfully preserved. But thus much may serve to have spoken of the first great act of Providence, which I called Preservation. My next work is to speak concerning Government. *Use* 3.

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SERMON VIII.

Pſal. CIII. 19.

The Lord hath prepared his Throne in the Heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all

I AM (as you know) diſcourſing concerning the Principal Acts of *Actual Providence*, which I told you were two: 1. *Preſervation*, 2. *Government*. All things were at firſt created by a *Divine word of Power*: all things are preſerved by a Divine Power; He *upholdeth all things by the word of his Power* (ſaith the Apoſtle). This I have done with: but Gods actual Providence doth not extend only to the upholding and the preſerving of all his creatures, but he *governeth them alſo*. Preſervation reſpecteth their ſeveral beings and capacities: *Government* reſpecteth their *motions* and *actions*. For a Diſcourſe upon this I have made choice of this Text, and chuſing it with that deſign only, I do not take my ſelf ſo much concerned to enquire into its relation to what went before, or followeth. I ſhall only conſider it in it ſelf: and ſo it giveth you an account,

1. *Of the Royal Seat of the Divine reſidence, or place* where God more glorioufly manifeſts that Preſence, which yet filleth Heaven and Earth. *He hath* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *his throne prepared in the heavens*. 2. *The vaſtneſs of his Imperial royal influence and dominion*; *His Kingdom* (ſaith the Text) *ruleth over all*. I ſhall not meddle with the firſt part: it is the ſecond only which I have to do with. The Propoſition ſhortly is this:

Prop. *That he whoſe Throne is in Heaven, governeth the whole Creation.*

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The Scripture ſpeaketh plentifully to this point of Gods Univerſal dominion, 1 *Chron.* 16. 31, *Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoyce; and let men ſay amongſt the Heathen, The Lord reigneth.* Pſalm 96. 10, *Say amongſt the heathen the Lord reigneth.* Pſalm 93. 1, *The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with Majeſty,*&c. Pſalm 97. 1, *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoyce.* Pſalm 99. 1, *The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble.* An Heathen Prince acknowledgeth it, *Dan.* 4. 3, 34. But not to multiply Texts, Reaſon will evince it; every Superiour being hath a kind of natural right to rule over thoſe that are inferiour to it: and God being the Supreme Being, and the Creator of all other beings too, hath a natural right to extend a Kingdom and Dominion over all; and that not only as he is Superior to them, and greater than they are, but alſo as he is the efficient cauſe of all, the Creator of all things. But to ſpeak more particularly: we will enquire, 1. *What Government is*; 2. *What are the Objects of this univerſal Government and Dominion*, which the Propoſition aſcribeth unto God; 3. *What are thoſe ſpecial acts, by which God exerciſeth this Dominion and Government.*

Government implieth three things: 1. *The fixing of ſome ends.* 2. *A power inveſted in ſome one or more perſons, upon others, ordering and directing them in order to that end.* 3. *The exerciſe of this Power.* The end of Government amongſt men, is uſually the peace, quiet and ſettlement of a place: Gods End is his own glory; He hath made all things for himſelf, and he doth all things for himſelf, for the fulfilling of his own Counſels and Will, in order to the glorifying of his holy Name. The Apoſtle ſaith, *Of him*, and *for him* are all things.

2. Secondly, *Government* implieth *a power inveſted in one or more perſons in order to an end.* Now that God hath ſuch a power none can deny and acknowledg him to be God; *Once have I ſpoken, yea twice have I heard it* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *that power belongeth unto God.* He who confeſſeth God to be almighty, and able to do whatſoever he pleaſeth, muſt own him to have a power ſufficient for an Univerſal Government. If we take Power for Authority, *i. e.* a Right to exerciſe a power over ſuch and ſuch objects, that alſo God hath by the very law of Nature; *Hath not the potter a power over the clay?* and is not the creature the clay, and God the potter?

3. But thirdly, *Government implieth yet ſomething more*, viz.

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an actual exercise of this power; and indeed this is the main: *Actual Government is the exercise of a power, wherewith a person or persons, are invested over some persons, or things in order to some wise ends.* But let me come to the second Question, *viz.*

Quest. *What are the particular Objects of this Divine providential Government?* The Text saith, *His Kingdom ruleth over all.* I think that term *all* is to be expounded by three general heads: 1. *The beings and existences of his creatures.* 2. *The motions and actions of his creatures.* 3. *The omissions and obliquities of his creatures*: all these (as I shall shew you) fall under the government of Providence.

1. The *Beings and existences of his creatures*, the production and cessation of them; the giving of them Being belongs to Creation, the ordering and directing their beings under their circumstances belongeth to Providence: so doth the issue and determination of their beings with their circumstances; *Psalm* 68. 20, *Unto God belong the issues from death.* Providence holdeth the key of the Womb, and the key of the Grave; he it is that killeth, and maketh alive. From that it is that one generation passeth, another cometh; and this holdeth to all creatures: *There is not a sparrow which falleth to the ground without the will of our heavenly Father*, as our Saviour telleth us.

2. A second object of this *Providential Government*, is all the *motions and actions of his creatures*: all their operations according to their several forms and natures of being. There are some motions and actions of reasonable creatures: I mean, some of their moral actions influenced from their wills, upon which God hath no efficient influence; such are mens sins and obliquities, but there are none but he ordereth and governeth, when done and brought into effect; even with the vilest actions of men God hath thus much to do. 1. *To uphold their natural powers and faculties while they do them.* 2. *To order and govern them, when done*, to his own wise ends, so as they shall issue in the glory of his holy and blessed Name: and that brings me to the Third.

3. A third Object of the government of Providence, is the *Omissions, Errours and oblique actions of his creature.* Every creature moveth not according to a Divine Rule, man only varieth; the *stormy winds fulfil his word*; the Sun, Moon, Stars, all obey his Law; man only rebels, and is guilty of thousands of obliquities and *Omissions.* Now these also are under the government

of Providence, ſome corrupt inclinations and luſtings he reſtraineth; Others he ſuffers to break out into action, then *maketh the wrath of man to praiſe him.* But this is enough to have ſpoken to the ſecond Queſtion, the third followeth:

3d Queſt. *By what particular acts doth Providence ſhew it ſelf in the Government of the World?*

1. To this I ſhall anſwer in ſeveral particulars: 1. *By cauſing the production and exiſtences of his creatures, or making them to ceaſe as it pleaſeth him*; He cauſeth the barren wombs, and again maketh the barren to bring forth Seven. Hence you ſhall find the multiplication of *Abrahams ſeed* to the number of the grains of the duſt of the Earth, or ſands upon the-Sea-ſhore, is made the matter of a Divine Promiſe. The Beings of his creatures are both the objects of his Government, and his *Utenſils* or Inſtruments in Governing; for he governeth a great part of the inferiour creatures by the Superiour influenced with Reaſon and Wiſdom for that end. God bleſſed man, *Gen.* 1. ſaying, *Have dominion over the fiſh of the ſea, and the fowls of the air, and every moving creature that moveth upon the Earth.* Now the Lord in order to this Government, multiplieth or diminiſheth them: whence is it, but from this Providence of God, that the wild Beaſts are not multiplied to the deſtruction of man? that we are not ſo full of *Lions, Bears, Tygers, Wolves, Foxes* and other hurtful creatures, as we are of ſheep and Neat-cattel, though many of them often bring forth young in greater plenty than thoſe uſeful unto man? Thus alſo God ordereth the reaſonable World: ſhould men live as in the firſt age of the World, to five, ſix, ſeven hundred years; ſhould all children born live to an old age, there would be no room on the Earth, there would not be food enough for them: God therefore in order to the Government of the Univerſe, as well as for the puniſhment of the multitude of ſins committted in the Earth, limiteth the number of Individuals, and diminiſheth them; and this not only in an ordinary courſe of nature, ſhortening the periods of their life, but by ſome extraordinary diſpenſations: ſuch as thoſe of War, Peſtilence, and other fatal and Epidemical diſeaſes, by which he not only ſerveth the great end of his glory in puniſhing the ſins of men, but alſo reduceth the World to a governable body, and to ſuch a paſs, that one ſort of his creatures is ſufficient for the ſervice of another, ſo as the whole is pre-

preserved. But this is but the first thing.

2. God governeth the World (Secondly) *by maintaining the laws and ordinances of Nature.* As there are positive Laws, written Laws in the Word of God, which God hath ordained for the government of reasonable creatures: so there are Laws and Ordinances of Nature, by which creatures not indued with reason move, and work in order to the preservation of the whole, by the mutual service each of other. Thus *Jer.* 31. 35, you read of the *Ordinances of the Moon and Stars*, and *of Gods covenant of the day, and of the night*, that they should be in their season, *Jer.* 33. 20. Such an Ordinance you have, *Gen.* 8. 22. *While the Earth remaineth, seed-time, and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.* By vertue of these Ordinances it is that the *Sun every day riseth, and setteth upon one part of the world*, causing day and night; *rejoycing as a Bridegroom to run its course* (as the *Psalmist* speaketh), that at sometimes of the year it is nearer, another it is further off this, or that part of the Earth. These Laws and Ordinances of Nature are nothing else than the *affections*, and *inclinations* of several creatures to their several motions and actions. Now these affections and inclinations were put into them in the day of their Creation, but the Providence of God maintaineth these Laws: and hence it is, that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, do not cease. By this it is, that the proud waters ordinarily exceed not the bounds of the sands which God hath set to limit them: The winds do not always blow from the same quarter, nor at the same rate. The Earth brings forth its variety of fruits: there are thousands of things, of which we can give no other account than that they cause such effects, they make such motions by an Ordinance of Nature, by a Law which God imprinted upon them in the day of their Creation; and God preserveth them by his Providence, which daily worketh in upholding these Laws, and regulating the creature that it moveth not, nor acteth contrary to this Law.

3. A third thing wherein the *Government of Providence* is seen, is in the *miraculous suspension of these natural Laws and Ordinances, according to the good pleasure of God.* Indeed this is a specialty of Providence, and more proper to be handled under that head: I shall therefore only touch it here. It is a thing which God seldom or never doth, but for some more than ordinary declaration of Judgment,

ment, or Mercy. Thus he ſuſpended the law *of day and night*, to plague the *Egyptians* with three days continued darkneſs. He ſuſpended again the law of Nature for the ebbing and flowing of the Sea, that the *Iſraelites* might paſs over it in ſafety. By an Ordinance and law of Nature the fire burneth, the hungry Lions devour men; God ſuſpendeth both theſe Laws in the caſe of the three Children, and of *Daniel*: by an Ordinance of Nature, the Sun keepeth its courſe, and is in a continual progreſſive motion; God ſuſpendeth its motion in *Joſhuah's* caſe, altereth it, and maketh it to come back in the caſe of *Hezekiah*, 2 Kings 20. 10: by the Ordinance of Nature, the Earth brings forth her fruit, ſo doth the womb ordinarily; God ſuſpends this Law in Judgment; the Earth is made as Iron, the Heaven as Braſs: *men commit whoredom, yet do not encreaſe; they eat, and have not enough*, Hoſ. 4. 10. This both demonſtrates the governance of Divine Providence, and alſo ſheweth how God exerciſeth it. This is a third Particular.

4. A fourth Particular, wherein God ſheweth his Dominion over all, and exerciſeth his Government over the whole Creation, is *his influencing all creatures to their natural actions, either in a more ordinary, or extraordinary manner*. Every living creature hath its natural *motions, and actions*, and powers and faculties in order to them, which are the principles of thoſe operations; and in the upholding of thoſe powers to thoſe natural motions and actions, God exerteth and putteth forth his *preſerving power* of Providence: but his extraordinary influencing of them to ſome motions and actions, which are not in a natural courſe and order, doth more eminently ſhew the Governing power of Divine Providence. That *Locuſts* and Caterpillers ſhould feed upon graſs and green herbs, this is but their natural motion and action according to their nature and the kind of their being; but that they ſhould come in troops, and rather feed upon one place than upon another, till they had devoured all the graſs and green herbs in *Egypt*, this was extraordinary: *Pſalm* 105.24, *He ſpake; and the Caterpillers came; and did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured all the fruit of their ground*. And again, Pſalm 74. 46, *He gave their increaſe to the Caterpiller*. The ſame may be ſaid for the Flies, Lice, Frogs, and other creatures uſed as a plague upon *Pharaoh*: but indeed this is rather a ſpecialty of Providence, than belonging to the ordinary Government of it;

though very demonstrative of the governing power of Providence.

5. A fifth act, by which the Providence of God exerciseth its governing power and influence, is, *His daily raising up and influencing Governours for the Households and Societies of men, and giving checks to them upon their miscarriages, and mal-administrations.* The governing Providence of God, exerteth it self either more *immediately*, or *mediately*. Other creatures God ordinarily governeth by *men*: many of them, I mean, influencing man with Reason and Discretion, by which he ruleth, ordereth, and governeth them, though many of them be much more mighty and powerful than he: the mouth of the *horse and mule which have no understanding*, by the Providence of God so influencing man, are *held with the bit and bridle, lest they come near unto us*, Psalm 32. 9. The Whale is smitten *with a spear*, wild *bulls* and *boars* are hunted down, *&c.* The Ox is tamed and brought to serve our uses, who are much less in strength than he is. *Men* also are governed by *men*; the weaker by those that are more wise and powerful: but whence have the Governours their wit and power, their wisdom and understanding, prompting them to make Laws acceptable to the greater part of Subjects, so as conas spiracies are of the lesser number, and subdued to the greater and keeps them in order? Is it not from the Lord, great in wisdom, and wonderful in counsel? *Psalm* 75. 7, *God is the Judg, he pulleth down one, and setteth up another, and by him Kings reign.* God ruleth the World by Magistrates: which if well considered, would aw men to that duty of honour and obedience which they owe to those that are their Superiours; and may make us to understand how we ought to be subject for conscience-sake, and for Gods sake in things commanded, which we cannot say are contrary to the Divine Law, nor so appear to us, and have any manifest appearance of good for the government and peace of the whole. As on the other side, it calls to *Kings to be wise, and the Judges of the Earth to be instructed to serve the Lord with fear*, and to rejoyce before him in *their great capacities with trembling*: Psal. 2. 10, 11, they are but the Lords *Vice-Roys*; and as *Jehoshaphat* told his Judges, *they judg not for themselves, but for the Lord*; for him whose Throne is prepared in the Heavens, and whose Kingdom is over all. They ought therefore (according to the command to the Kings of *Israel*) to *have the book of the law be-*

fore them, and to be reading therein all the days of their life; and where that doth not give them particular direction to have the *honour and glory of God* yet in their Eye, to measure all their laws and actions according to that Rule; to remember *God is the Judg*, and hath only exalted and dignified them to rule the World, or this or that part of the World by them: still the *Government is the Lords.*

6. A sixth particular act by which God providentially governeth the World, is, *By influencing the souls of some in it to such actions as more immediately tend to his honour and glory.* God hath an honour and glory from the *natural complexion*, and *constitution*, and motions of *inanimate Beings*. Psal. 148.6,8. Thus the Heavens, and in them the Sun, Moon, Stars; from them the snow, rain, hail, meteors, the lightning and thunder, the cold and heat, the vapours and stormy winds bring glory to God: *stormy winds fulfilling his word*, saith the *Psalmist. The heavens declare the glory of God, the Earth sheweth his handy-work*, Psalm 19.1. God hath made in the Heavens a tabernacle for the Sun, a course for the Moon and Stars: the very complexions of them, their natural and necessary motions bring God abundance of glory. Now this ariseth from a necessary causation, they cannot but do it. The same may be said of *brute creatures*, though animate, not acting upon Election: The Whale in the Sea; the *Lion* and *Tiger* amongst the beasts; the *Eagle* and others amongst the birds; the *Bee*, the *Silk-worm*, and others amongst Insects: several sorts of creeping things glorify God, but it is necessarily. Man only amongst earthly creatures glorifieth God voluntarily from a principle within himself, and upon choice. Take mankind in the general, it is a noble piece of Gods Creation, and necessarily glorifieth God. *Man is fearfully* and *wonderfully made*, his body is an admirable structure, but the great glory which God hath is from his spiritual actions. Man is not a mute Preacher of Gods glory, as the Heavens and the Earth, the Sun, Moon and Stars are, or brute creatures are. He hath a Soul, and understanding, will, affections; from these God expects a great homage and glory. But now take man in his depraved estate, and he doth nothing less; No creatures, but the evil Angels so much dishonour God, and so cross him in the great end of his governing the World, which is his glory. Now it pleaseth God to influence some of the children of men, to such actions as do truly and im-

immediately tend to his glory, *ex intentione agentis*, from the intention, will and deſign of the agents; and alſo *ex fine operis*, from the end and iſſue of the action: ſuch are *acts of repentance*, *faith*, and all *manner of holineſs*. The glory of God in theſe actions, is firſt in the intention of the agent, and alſo in the iſſue of the work. *Joſhua* exhorteth *Achan* to confeſs his ſin, and *give glory to God*: The Apoſtle ſaith, *Rom.* 4, *That Abraham was ſtrong in the faith, giving glory to God*. And our Saviour tells his Diſciples, *Joh.* 15. 8, *Herein is my father glorified, if you bring forth much fruit*, the fruit of Holineſs. Now ſo depraved is the heart of man, that he neither could nor would do any of them, if not influenced and over-powered by God; *Without me* (ſaith Chriſt) *you can do nothing*. God therefore, as to actions of this nature, doth influence the heart of man, making him willing and *able*; ſo that as to the event the actions are neceſſary, but as to the manner of working they do them freely, willingly and chearfully: and this is another piece of Governing Providence, by which he ruleth and governeth the motions and actions of men to his praiſe.

7. A ſeventh act, by which God governeth the motions and actions of rational creatures. 1. His *permiſſion* and *overruling their oblique intentions and actions*. 1. He permitteth the doing of them. 2. He overruleth and ordereth them, when done, to his own ends. Concerning Gods *permiſſion of ſin*, I may have hereafter a more proper and particular opportunity to ſpeak. His *overruling* and *ordering* of them, when done, to his own wiſe ends, is what I ſhall ſpeak to, and but ſhortly in this place. It is the great art and wiſdom of a civil or military Governour, amongſt men, to make uſe of the ſeveral humours and paſſions of thoſe under his Command, to make them ſerve the great ends which he hath propoſed to himſelf in his Government. The great and infinite power and wiſdom of God in the Government of the world, is in this wonderfully perſpicuous; making uſe of the ſeveral luſts, paſſions, and humours of men to his own praiſe and glory; for God governeth man ſo, as he putteth no force upon his will: If he doth any thing that is good, acceptable, and well-pleaſing unto God, he doth it willingly and freely. The power of God indeed is ſeen in making ſome ſouls willing; *he giveth to will*, (ſaith the Apoſtle), not in overruling him, to do the action whether he will or no:

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Man acting thus freely, many men do that which is evil from the sinful inclination of their own hearts, not corrected by the power of Divine Grace. God permits mens sins, *Act.* 14. 16, *Who in times past suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways*; but the actions being done, his power is seen in *overruling the oblique action*, beyond, or quite contrary unto the intention of the agent, to the glory of his holy and great name: this is that which the *Psalmist* saith, *Psal.* 56. 10, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he shall restrain.* You have an eminent Text to prove this, *Isa.* 10. 5, 6, 7, *O Assyria, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like mire in the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few.* The business was this: *Israel* (that is, the ten tribes) had grievously provoked God; God was determined to punish them, they were *an hypocritical Nation:* There must be an instrument to bring divine wrath upon them. *Assyria* shall be the instrument, therefore called, *the rod of Gods anger*, and the staff of his *indignation.* Possibly the inward cause moving the *Assyrian*, was his own lust, the enlargement of his Territories; some revenge of himself, the robbing of their treasures: he meant not so, his heart never did think so meerly to serve God, in the execution of his wrath; but herein was the governing and overruling Providence of God seen, that he so ruled the lust, ambition, and revenge of the King of *Assyria*, that he accomplished his pleasure upon mount *Zion.* And indeed thus God doth, as to all the sinful actions of men, God will have his glory from them, but it is by the overruling power of his Providence: the sinner meaneth not so, neither is it in his heart to think so. The persecutor saith, I will satisfie my lust, or I will supply my self with moneys for the satisfaction of my lust, that is his end: in the mean time God by his Providence overruleth his malitious actions, so as he chasteneth his people for their sins, and ripeneth the sinner for destruction. God in this doth with sinners, as the wise *Faulconer* doth with the *Hawk:* The *Hawk* is a bird of prey, a ravenous bird, that flyeth at the *Pheasant* or *Partridg* for it self, to satisfie its rapacious quality;

lity; but the *Faulconer*, by his art, tameth the *Hawk*, and maketh uſe of its ravenous quality to ſerve his own table: and this is a wonderful piece of Divine Providence in governing of the world; Moſt of the motions and actions of men in it are diametrically oppoſite to Gods glorious end, yet they are all made to ſerve the manifeſtation of Gods glory, and to bring about his great deſigns in the world. But this is enough to have ſpoken Doctrinally, to this point of the Governing-Providence of God. I cannot at this time compaſs all, which I would ſpeak of for the Application of this point.

Uſe 1. Only let me mind you again from hence, *how great the God of Heaven muſt neceſſarily be*, and that, not only in reſpect of the immenſity of his Being, *as he filleth Heaven and Earth*; but in reſpect of his activity and power: he is called the King of Kings, the ruler of Princes. The *Perſians* thought themſelves great Princes that ruled one hundred and twenty ſeven Provinces. The *Turk* glorieth in the greatneſs of his Empire; ſo doth the *Spaniard*, upon whoſe dominions, they ſay, the Sun never ſitteth. But alas! what are all theſe to the Lords Kingdom, who *ruleth over all*, and that after another manner than any Earthly Prince, who exerciſeth a dominion over his Subjects and Vaſſals? how juſtly therefore is greatneſs aſcribed unto God? and who is there that can be compared with him, or like unto him? The Unity of the Divine Being alſo may be concluded from hence, for if he ruleth over all, then all is ſubject unto him; and there cannot be another God imagined, but muſt be in ſubjection unto him. Indeed ſuch a ſubjection, or ſubordination, the Heathens fancied amongſt their idols. *Jupiter* was their ſupreme idol, others were ſubject unto him; but he is no God that can truckle under another, and be in ſubjection unto any Being. And this greatneſs of God calleth to all men to fear before him, and do reverence unto him: who ſhall not fear before that God, *whoſe throne is prepared in the heaven, and whoſe Kingdom ruleth over all?* and for a free and voluntary ſubjection to him, for he ruleth over all, not as a Tyrant and Oppreſſor, whoſe title lies in his Sword, but as one who is a native Prince, and hath a rightful title, not to obey whom is the *higheſt Rebellion*, which *Samuel* compareth to *the ſin of witchcraft*. But I muſt leave the diſtinct and full application of this Doctrine for a further diſcourſe.

SER-

SERMON IX.

Psal. CIII. 19.

The Lord hath prepared his Throne in the Heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all.

I Am at this time to make Application of what you have heard, concerning the *Governing-Providence of God.* I shall do it under three Heads, shewing you how it may be useful for *Instruction*, for *Consolation*, and for *Exhortation*.

In the first place, you may conclude from hence, In what sense alone any thing can be said to be *casual* or *necessary*; what to determine concerning *Chance*, and *Fortune*, or *Fate*. As to the first I shall only lay down this Conclusion. *Use* 1.

Concl. That although many things, as to our eyes, and apprehensions of them, may appear *casual*, yet *there is nothing so with reference unto God*, the first universal cause. It is truly said by *Augustine*, that *chance* and *fortune* are but terms of humane ignorance; as we say of the old Philosophers occult qualities, they are but the refuges of ignorance: so the same may be said of *chance* and *fortune*. He described *chance* well, that called it *inopinatum rei eventum*, an event of a thing which man thought not of; it is not *inordinatus eventus*, but *inopinatus*: there is no event of any thing that is a slip of Providence, not ordered and disposed by him, whose *Kingdom ruleth over all*. Beings and existences, motions and actions, yea, errours and obliquities; nothing cometh to pass in the world, but was foreseen, fore-ordained, fore-ordered, and that in infinite wisdom; but many things come to pass which we did not think

of, could not foreſee whoſe cauſes are hidden from us: theſe things, we ſay, come by *chance* and *fortune*: A word indeed not very fit for a Chriſtians mouth. I remember *Auguſtine*, more than once, repents that he had defiled his tongue with it. The Heathens ignorant of the true God, and of his influence on all things, deviſed ſuch a blind God as *Fortune*; and aſſigned it a place amongſt their other Idols: *Te facimus fortuna Deum.* But Chriſtians muſt own no ſuch blind cauſe of things: they believe there is a God, *whoſe throne is prepared in the Heavens, and whoſe Kingdom ruleth over all*; and therefore can leave no place for *chance* or *fortune*. You read of a caſe, *Deut.* 19. 5, which one would think, if any thing in the world were caſual and fortuitous, that were ſo. *A man goeth into the Wood, with his neighbour, to hew wood; and his hand fetcheth a ſtroke with the ax to cut down a tree, and the head ſlippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour that he dye.* What can be imagined more caſual and fortuitous than this, for the head of an Hatchet to fly off from the helve, and to kill a man at work with him who had the Hatchet? ſuch were the caſes alſo mentioned, *Numb.* 35. 22, 23. Caſting a thing *upon a man without laying of wait*; or *with any ſtone*, wherewith a man may dye, *ſeeing him not*, nor *ſeeking his harm*: yet in theſe caſes, *Exod.* 21. 13, God is ſaid *to deliver the perſon ſlain into his hand*, who involuntarily and unwarily hath been the cauſe of his death. There are many things, which indeed to us are caſual, nothing is ſo to God; he hath ordered all, he ruleth and governeth all actions. *Ahimaaz* and *Cuſhi* knew not of each others journey; or at leaſt he that ran firſt knew nothing of the others journey: they both met at the Court of *David* to carry tydings of *Abſaloms* death: but *Joab* had ordered the running of both. *Ahimaaz* caſually met *Cuſhi* there; but though it was caſual to him, it was not ſo to *Joab* who ſent him: I ſay, nothing is in it ſelf caſual, or with reſpect unto God caſual; with reſpect to us many things are ſo, that is, we do not know the cauſes of them; but God ordereth and directeth all; his Kingdom, his Rule and Government extendeth to it; his hand is in it, either permitting, or effecting it.

Secondly, You may from hence conclude *how things are neceſſary*. *Arminians* make a great deal of ſtir about this, and charge

charge thoſe, whom they call *Calviniſts*, as maintaining a *fatal neceſſity* of all things. Let us examine the word *Fate* a little, we ſhall find a three or fourfold uſe of it; there is two or three ſorts of Fate, which we ſhall condemn as freely as any of them: but in a fourth ſenſe we ſhall find the word honeſt enough, and to deſtroy it, will ask better arguments than any they have yet favoured the world with.

1. *There is a Stoical fate.* The Stoicks were a ſort of ancient Philoſophers; you read of their name in Scripture, *Act.* 17. 18. They fancied an *eternal neceſſity of things, Cui & Deum licet nolentem ſubeſſe fingebant nexum in rebus ipſis*; to which, they conceived God himſelf, though againſt his will, was ſubjected: according to this they fancied all things came to paſs by an equal neceſſity, and that the wills of men were forced by it. This is a fate to be abominated by all thoſe that own God, and him as the firſt cauſe of all things.

2. There is *a Mathematical fate.* This was a neceſſity of things depending upon the motions and influences of the ſtars: theſe men indeed make God to be the ruler of the Stars, but the Stars to be the Rulers of mens motions and actions, according to that verſe in credit amongſt them, *Aſtra regunt homines, ſed regit aſtra Deus*; as if God did not exerciſe a daily Dominion and Power over the Creation, but had made the celeſtial bodies, which being created, and ſet in their order, move other things by a fatal neceſſity. Of both theſe, *Auguſtine* ſaith, *Si cor tuum non eſſet fatuum, non crederes fatum*: if thou hadſt not a fooliſh heart, thou wouldſt not credit ſuch a thing as fate.

3. There is thirdly, *a Phyſical or Natural fate*, by which we underſtand that neceſſity which God hath eſtabliſhed in natural cauſes; according to which, they cannot but produce ſuch and ſuch effects, ſuppoſing them not hindered by the ſupreme cauſe: thus the fire burneth neceſſarily, and we ſay, all natural cauſes move neceſſarily, and produce their effects, unleſs ſuſpended, hindered, or reſtrained by ſome ſuperiour cauſe: this is called in Scripture Gods Covenant with *day* and *night*, *heat* and *cold*, *ſummer* and *winter*. Such a neceſſity all muſt acknowledg, in the operation of all natural agents; the power and pleaſures of God only being reſerved to countermand their operations, which when he doth, we call it a miraculous work

of God: thus, day and night, cold and heat, ſeed-time and harveſt, ſummer and winter are under a fate, they neceſſarily follow one another; but as God was the firſt cauſe of this neceſſity by the Covenant he eſtabliſhed, ſo their event is in the power of God to hinder, or ſuſpend, or alter as he pleaſeth.

4. But then, Laſtly, There is a *Theological or Chriſtian fate*, which is nothing but *a neceſſity of event* impoſed upon things by the moſt *holy, wiſe, eternal, free purpoſe, and counſel* of God, executed by his Providence. It is true, the name of *fate* ſoundeth ill, becauſe of the *Stoical* and *Mathematical* vanities about it; but if we take it for, *Quod Deus in animo ſuo fatus eſt, apud ſe ſtatuit, ac decrevit:* what God hath ſaid within himſelf, purpoſed and decreed, it is innocent enough. Now whoſo denieth a *fate* (if they will call it ſo), in this ſenſe, doth not ſo well, as he ſhould do, underſtand the Divine Nature, or the Scriptures. We neither deny (ſaith *Auguſtine*), *an order of cauſes*, which *the will of God hath ſet*; neither do we call it *fate:* In the mean time they are very ignorant, that cannot ſee the difference betwixt this *neceſſity* of *events*, and the *Stoical fate*.

1. The *Stoicks ſubjected God himſelf to fate*: this neceſſity dependeth upon the will of God as the cauſe of it. 2. They made their *fate* pre-exiſtent to God. 3. They aſſerted a *fate*, that took away all the liberty of mans will. Now *this is no conſequent* (ſaith *Auguſtine*) *that if God hath ſet a certain order of all cauſes, then nothing is in the power of our wills.* The upſhot of all is this. We ſay there are a thouſand things happen in reſpect of us caſually, and fortuitouſly, that is, we know not the cauſes of them, and manner of their operations, yet there is nothing ſo in reſpect of God. And though all things happen neceſſarily, as to the event, with reſpect to the decree of God, which hath ſet all things in an order; and in reſpect of the univerſal power, and influence of his Governing Providence; yet for ſuch things as are done by us, they are not neceſſarily brought forth, but freely: our will is not forced, but acteth as a free agent. But I ſhall add no more to the firſt Branch of Inſtruction.

Non eſt autem conſequens, ut ſi Deo certus eſt omnium cauſarum ordo, nihil ſit in noſtræ voluntatis arbitrio. Aug. l. 5. *De civ. dei.*

2. *Branch.* What you have heard, may *help to confirm your*

Faith

Faith as *to the glorious nature of God*, and that in four or five Particulars:

1. As to his *Omniſcience* or knowledg of all things; He muſt needs know all things who governeth all things; He governs all the beings and exiſtences of his creatures, all their motions and actions, all their errours, obliquities and Omiſſions, as I have ſhewed you, which he could not do if they were not all naked in his ſight: all things muſt needs be open and naked in his ſight with whom we have to do. The Doctrine of Gods Omniſcience is evident from the work of Creation? He that made the Eye, ſhall he not ſee? He that made the Ear, ſhall he not hear? and it is evident from the work of Providence, if his Kingdom ruleth over all.

2. Secondly, It as much confirmeth us in the Doctrine of Gods *Omnipotence*. *If his Kingdom ruleth* over all: 1. He muſt have a power to Rule and govern all. 2. He muſt be in a capacity to exerciſe this power, and there muſt be no power able to reſiſt him; So that you may ſee the Reaſonableneſs of thoſe titles given to God in Scripture, *viz.* *The Lord God Omnipotent*. *The Almighty God*. The *King of Kings*. The *Lord of Lords*. The *Lord of all the Hoſts of Heaven and Earth*. If there were any thing too hard for God; if he could be reſiſted, he could not *rule over all*.

3. Thirdly, It may confirm you in the *Activity of the Divine Eſſence*. The Schoolmen ſay, That God is *Totus Actus*, wholly an Act, always moving, working, operating; ſo it muſt be if he hath ſuch a Rule, as I have been deſcribing to you. He muſt fill all places, not as a meer inactive *moles*, and bulk of a thing filleth a place: but ſo as at the ſame time he is in all places at work, ſeeing, obſerving, governing, effecting, and directing, or reſtraining, and over-ruling. We have no Similitude to expreſs it by, but cometh much ſhort. That of the Soul in man comes neareſt it which is in all parts of the body, animating, actuating, and governing of it.

4. It confirms us in our belief of the *Infinite wiſdom of God*. He is called, The only *wiſe God*, 1 Tim. 1. 17, and *Jude v.* 25. This Doctrine concludes it. We ſee it requires a great deal of wiſdom to govern *a Family*, and keep it (if it conſiſts of many members) in order; but much more to govern the greater bodies of people, in *Towns*, *Cities*, *Kingdoms*, *Empires*, &c. Such a variety there is

of motions, humours, passions and tempers of people: Who is able to conceive what Wisdom it requires to govern all beings in the World, all motions and actions of all creatures in the World, and to keep them in any order or decorum at all? In fine, Next to the work of Creation, there is nothing like the work of Providence well-studied to give a man the true notion of God, and let us know what manner of Essence, the Divine Essence necessarily must be. Thus much by way of Instruction.

Use 2. Secondly, This Doctrine serveth *for the unspeakable consolation of the people of God.* Psalm 97. 1, *The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoyce; let the multitude of Isles be glad thereof.* It is matter of rejoycing to all the World that the Lord reigneth; and there is none so vile and wicked, but experienceth much (though many consider it not) of the good effects of this universal Dominion which God exerciseth. The Devils cannot do what they please in it; the wills and passions of men cannot have their swing. There is an Almighty One that holds the reins upon the brutish affections and passions of men; the ill effects of which the greatest Atheists and contemners of God which live in the World, would quickly experience: but to the people of God, as being the lesser number, the most hated and maligned part of the World, and the far weaker as to natural strength and power; besides the restraint their Souls are under from putting out what natural power and strength they have beyond the Divine Law, doth most eminently demonstrate to them the good effects of the Lords Reign, and the necessity of it. *Isa.* 52.7, *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth?* It is good news to all the World, *that God reigneth*; but particularly to *Sion*, to the Church and the people of God: to the whole visible Church it is good tidings, but particularly to the invisible part that is militant here on Earth, and the individual members thereof.

1. This Doctrine first is of great use to *comfort them against, and under all their disturbances for things which happen to the Church in general, or themselves in particular.* A ship at Sea were but in an ill case if it were not for him that sate at the Helm: a skilful Pilot there ordereth her well enough, so as the winds serve his design; so it is with the Church tossed with winds and waves, she is only safe in the Lords government of all the affairs of the World.

World. *Luther* (I remember) saith thus of himself; "I (saith "he) have often attempted to prescribe God ways and methods "in the government of his Church, and other affairs. I have "said, *Ah Domine, hoc velim ita fieri, hoc ordine, hoc eventu.* I "would have this thing thus done, in this order, with this event. "But, saith he, God did quite contrary to what I asked of him. "Then (saith he) I thought with my self what I would have had, "was not contrary to the glory of God, but would have been "of great use for the sanctifying of his Name. In short, it was "a brave design, well advised, but undoubtedly God laught at "at this wisdom of men: and said, Go to now, I know you are "a learned man, and a wise man; But it was never my manner "to allow Saint *Peter*, or Saint *Martin* or any other, to instruct, "teach, govern, or lead me. *Non sum Deus passivus, sed acti-* "*vus*; I am not a passive, but an active God. That great man and *Melancthon* were two famous Instruments in the *Reformation of Germany*, but of different tempers: *Melancthon* was a man of a more mild and gentle Spirit, and melancholick timerous temper. *Luther* was of a more fierce and bold temper. *Melancthon* would often write very troubled Letters to *Luther* about the state of the *Church-affairs*. *Luther* would constantly make use of this argument, from the Governing-Providence of God to support *Melancthon*. *Melancthon* (saith he), *Let God alone* to govern *the World*; *The Lord reigneth*. It pleaseth God so to order it in his Providence, that the face of affairs relating to the Church, often looks very sadly, and there is nothing which giveth the spirits of the people of God a greater disturbance. Now all these disturbances are caused from our Not-attending to this Principle; which yet every good Christian professeth to receive, and to believe. Were we but rooted and grounded in the faith of this one Principle, *That the Kingdom of God ruleth over all*, and that he exerciseth a special care and Government relating to his Church, and ruleth the World with a special regard to the good of his little flock, we could neither be immoderately disturbed for the concern of the glory of God, nor yet for the Church of God. 1 *Chron.* 16. 31, *Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoyce, and let men say amongst the Nations, the Lord reigneth; let the Sea roar, and the fulness thereof, let the fields rejoyce, and all that is therein, Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judg the Earth.* Say there-

therefore unto *Zion*, *Thy God reigneth*. Let *Papiſts rage*, and *Atheiſts* ſcoff and threaten, and do what they can; Let all their Favourites take counſel together and join hand in hand: when they have done all they can, they will find, *that the Lord reigneth*. And this is enough to ſay unto *Sion*, or to any of her ſons and daughters. Two things are ſufficient in the moſt troubleſom and tumultuous times to ſtill, ſupport, and comfort the ſpirits of Gods people.

1. *That the Lord reigneth*; and hath an unqueſtionable ſuperintendence upon all the Beings of his creatures, all their motions and all their actions: He is higher in power than the higheſt of them.

2. That *this God is our God*. The *Pſalmiſt* hinteth both in that excellent 46 *Pſalm*, *v.* 10, *Be ſtill, and know that I am God; I will be exalted amongſt the Heathen, I will be exalted in the Earth: The Lord of Hoſts is with us: The God of Jacob is our refuge*. Let not therefore thoſe that fear the Lord trouble themſelves about the motions of the World, and commotions in it, about the ragings of lewd men againſt the intereſt of Chriſt. Let them not trouble themſelves further than is their duty, *viz.* to be ſenſible of the rebukes of Divine Providence; *The Lord reigneth, He that ſitteth in the heavens laugheth. The Lord ſhall have them in deriſion, and ſhall* (one day) *ſpeak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his ſore diſpleaſure*; and let the World know, that *yet he hath ſet his King upon his holy hill of Sion*. I remember a paſſage of *Luther*, *Si nos ruamus, ruet Chriſtus, unus Chriſtus ſcilicet, magnus ille regnator mundi*, &c. If we periſh (ſaith he) Chriſt muſt fall too; Chriſt, that great Governour of the World.

2. If we did conſider this as we might, or ought, *we ſhould alſo* ſee as *little reaſon to be diſturb'd, as to the concerns of our own Souls*: with the fear of two things as to their own Souls ordinarily the people of God are troubled: 1. *The prevailings of their own luſts and corruptions*. 2. *The prevailings of Satans temptations*. This Doctrine of Divine Providence excellently ſerveth to ſtill our unquiet ſpirits, as to either of theſe troubles. If the Lords Kingdom be over all, both theſe fears muſt be vain and cauſeleſs: for ſuppoſing the faithfulneſs of the Promiſes; *Sin ſhall not have dominion over your mortal bodies: God ſhall bruiſe Satan under your feet ſhortly: He will with the temptation give an happy iſſue.*

issue. If the Lords Kingdom be over all, neither shall corruption prevail, nor Satan by temptations prevail to destroy the work of God in our Soul, or to prevent us or hinder us as to the Kingdom, which God hath prepared for us: for as he that hath promised is faithful, or cannot repent, or lye; so he is powerful, and hath a dominion over all beings, persons, things, *&c. My father* (saith Christ) *is greater than all; none can pluck you out of my fathers hand.*

3. Lastly, It affords us a relief *against the sad prospect we have almost continually before our eyes, of the malicious actions of wicked and ungodly men.* There is, and always was, a generation in the World, which sleep not unless they do mischief; they are continually devising mischievous devices against the little flock of Christ: Their counsels, designs, works, have a plain and apparent tendency to the ruin of the whole interest of God in the World, if possibly not to leave Christ a Name in the Earth, nor Religion, pure and undefiled Religion, a footing in any place: he that runs may read this day, that the malice of some is against no form in Religion, but the life, and power, and practice of Holiness. The Devil their Master hath given them a command like that of *Benhadads*, *Fight neither against small nor great*: Neither against *Conformists*, nor *Non-conformists*, but against the life and practice of Religion only. Who seeth not, that although a man hath a further latitude than others of his brethren, as to matters of Conformity: yet if he liveth an holy life, if he presseth Holiness in his Pulpit, and practiseth it in his Conversation, he maketh himself a prey to the *common Enemies*, both of *Gospel, Faith* and conversation? But trouble not your selves, Christians, The Lord reigneth; the Frogs out of the bottomless pit, may through Gods permission get out, and croak a while, but to the pit they must return again. A sad time it was, when the Enemy said to the *Soul of the* man *according to Gods own heart, Flee as a bird to the mountains: when the wicked bent their bows, and made their arrows ready upon the string, that they might privily shoot at the upright in heart*, Psalm 11. 2. *When the foundations were destroyed, and the godly knew not what to do, what comfort at such a time?* Observe the same *Psalmist*, *v.* 4, *The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lords throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his ey-lids try the children of men.* I shall conclude this branch of Application with that *Psalm* 99. *v.* 1, *The Lord reigneth,*

ers, let the people tremble: he ſitteth between the Cherubims, let the Earth be moved: the Lord is great in Zion, and he is high above all people: Let them praiſe thy Lords great and terrible Name, for it is holy.

Uſe 3. Laſtly, This Doctrine is a foundation for a great deal of Exhortation: Every good Chriſtian upon hearing this Doctrine concerning Gods providential Kingdom, ſhould be ſaying, What now is my Duty? what ought I to do, *if the Lord reigneth?* I will tell you in five or ſix particulars, and ſo ſhut up this Diſcourſe concerning the main and principal acts of Divine Providence.

1. An *exerciſe of Faith* ſeems a very reaſonable piece of duty to be concluded from theſe premiſes. By *Faith* here, I underſtand not an aſſent to the Propoſition of the word, nor yet a *reſting* upon the *perſon of the Mediator* (which is the juſtifying act of faith); but *committing of our ſelves unto God, and caſting our care upon him in all eſtates and conditions*: a thing often called for in Scripture: *Caſt thy burthen on the Lord*, Pſal. 55,22. *Caſting all your care upon him, for he careth for you*, 1 Pet. 5.7. *Commit thy way unto the Lord*, Pſal. 37,5. So *Job* 5.8. *Prov.* 16.3. Sometimes it is called *a Truſting in God*, Pſalm 4.5, and 7.1. Pro. 28. 25, and 29. 5. Iſa. 57. 13, *&c.* *Power* and *Love* are the things that ſupport and juſtifie one in truſting and putting confidence in another. This Doctrine concerning the general Providence of God in governing all, juſtifies him as to his Power, to be the true and ſole Object of our confidence. We can truſt in none elſe, but may be controuled. The greateſt Princes of the Earth are but men under the authority of one, who is higher than they; and a mans truſt in them, oft times is but like the *Jews* truſting in *Egypt*, which the Prophet compareth to a leaning to a *bruiſed reed*, and upon a *broken ſtaff*, which are not able to bear the weight of a mans body; but if he leaneth upon them, they will run into his hand. If God be againſt us, man cannot protect from him, nor deliver out of his hand: therefore (ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſalm 118. 8, 9), *It is better to truſt in the Lord, than to put confidence in man: It is better to truſt in the Lord, than to put confidence in Princes*: but he, *whoſe Kingdom is over all*, muſt needs be a proper Object of our confidence; and as our *confidence in God* is warranted from *general Providence*, as to the power of God;

God; so as *to his love*, it is secured from *special Providence*: but of that I hope to speak distinctly, only a word here, lest any should say, But *although the Kingdom of God be over all*; so that upon the account of his Power, I may trust in him; yet how doth it appear his Power shall be put forth for me? I shall but offer four *Meditations to you.*

1. *That the glory of God* is the great end that he aimeth at in all his actions: He made all things for himself: he preserveth, he governeth the World for himself.

2. That whereas God hath a twofold *glory from his Creation*, Passive, and Active: *One* wherein the creature doth nothing from an inward principle; thus *the Heavens declare the glory of God*, and every creature speaks of his glory: The *other* wherein the creature is *Active*, acting out of intention and design, and from the principle of its own will: This latter is that which is most pleasing to God and acceptable.

3. *That God is capable of receiving no further glory from his creatures, than what floweth from the predication of his praise, and the doing of his Will.*

4. Lastly, That from hence it must needs follow, *That God is more glorified by his Church, and by his Saints, than by all the Creation besides.* God is mutely and passively glorified by other creatures: but *in his Temple men speak of his glory.* The children of men, and amongst them, only those who are *born of God*, do voluntarily and out of choice bring glory to God. God (if I may so speak) wrests his glory from others, as from *Pharaoh*, &c. God indeed in some sense may be said to be actively and voluntarily glorified by all Professors; but only by that *little flock* whom he hath chosen to himself, with a full intention, voluntarily and sincerely. They are the favourites of him, whose Kingdom is over all. Supposing then God to have a Dominion and Government over all, and to be continually in the exercise of it, surely, if *Haman* could say, *Whom should the King delight to honour but me?* They may with much better right and advantage say, For whom should the great *King of kings*, and *Lord of lords*, exercise a Rule and a Dominion? For whose advantage should the Lord govern the World, if not for those who most *freely, chearfully, voluntarily serve the greatest end and design which he hath in the World*, viz. his own glory; and can sincerely sum up all the desires of their Souls, in that one Petition, *Let the Lord be glorified?* surely,

therefore the children of God have all obligations imaginable upon them under all viciſſitudes of Providence, to truſt in God, and to commit their ways unto the Lord. But this is but the firſt Duty.

2. A *Second Duty* which this *Doctrine of Providence calleth to us for, and ſheweth us the reaſonableneſs of, is Prayer.* We have reaſon in our diſtreſſes to ſeek unto God by Prayer, becauſe *the Lord reigneth*; and it is an encouragement to us to ſeek him, *becauſe he reigneth*: Whither ſhould we go but unto him who hath power to help, ſave and deliver? Prayer therefore hath in all times of diſtreſs been the Refuge of Gods people. It was a ſad time with *David*, Pſalm 109. 4, *The mouth of the wicked, and of the deceitful* (ſaith he, *v.* 2, 3.) *are opened againſt me; they have ſpoken againſt me with a lying tongue. They compaſs me about alſo with words of hatred, and fought againſt me without a cauſe; for my love they are my adverſaries, but I give my ſelf unto Prayer*, v. 4. *Luther*, when he was in any ſtrait, was wont to ſay, *I will go and tell my God of it.* Prayer hath been the conſtant mean which the people of God have uſed for reſcue out of any troubles. You ſee it is upon a good foundation, *viz.* The Dominion which God hath over all, and his daily exerciſe of it.

3. It calleth to you for *praiſe and thanksgiving*; Prayer ſolliciteth for a mercy when we want it: Praiſe acknowledgeth the gift when received, and giveth unto God the glory of it. Nor can it, without robbery, be paid at any other than Gods Altar. *Is there any good done by thee?* Let God have the glory of that; thou haſt done it by vertue of a power or gift which is given to thee from above; yea, and it is from his *Governing-Power* of *Providence*, ruling, directing, and influencing thy heart to it: His Kingdom is over our hearts, our hands, our tongues, inclining them to every good thought, word, action; without him we can do nothing. *Doth any good come unto thee?* Let God alſo have the glory of that. The earthly Prince looketh that you ſhould acknowledg your peace, your trade to his Government; but he is but the inſtrument of God in bringing theſe things. It is the Kingdom of the Lord that ruleth over all; *he gives thee power to get riches*, (ſaith *Moſes*): I am ſure the people of God have more ſpecial reaſon to acknowledg God in all their peace and proſperity. They

are

are men of peace, their hands are againſt none; but the world hates them, they are as ſheep amongſt wolves; if they have any months or years of peace, they are beholden to the power and ruling of God for it. *Is any evil kept from you?* It is God that doth it, he that ruleth the raging of the Sea, he ſtilleth the tumults of the people; he hath the hearts of Kings in his hand, and turneth them as the Waters of the South. It is becauſe the Mountain of the Lord is full of Chariots and Horſes, that they are not ſwallowed up by their Enemies every moment. O ſee, and praiſe the Lord for the Governance of his Providence!

4. This Doctrine calleth to you for *patience in adverſity*. The *people of God are ſubjected to trials of adverſity*; yea, to fiery trials, as well as other men, yea, in greater degrees than others: hence the Apoſtle calleth to them, to let *patience have its perfect work*. Patience is nothing elſe but a quiet ſubmiſſion to the will of God under any adverſe diſpenſation of his Providence, in obedience to his command; and becauſe it is his will, and he layeth it upon us, *we have need of patience*, and the exerciſe of it is our duty; and this Doctrine will ſhew you that it is but a reaſonable duty. Let me ſhew it you in two or three particulars.

1. *As it ſhoweth you, that all your afflictions* (*be they of what* ſort and kind they will) *are from the Lord*, Job 5. 6, *Afflictions cometh not out of the duſt; nor doth trouble ſpring out of the ground. Is there* (ſaith God by the Prophet) *any evil in the City and I have not done it?* Affliction comes not by *chance* or *fate*, it comes from God, and is the wiſe iſſue of his Providence in the Government of the World: we have therefore no reaſon to fret and vex our ſelves againſt inſtruments. They are but inſtruments. Perhaps (ſaid *David* of *Shimei*,) God hath bidden him curſe. They poſſibly do ill, and at laſt will know it; but God is righteous in their unrighteouſneſs. *I held my peace* (ſaith *David*), *I knew it was thy doing. It is the Lord*, (ſaith that good man) *let him do what ſeemeth him good.*

2. *As it aſſureth us, that all things ſhall work together for good to them that love God.* If God ruleth and governeth the world, he certainly doth it for himſelf, and for his own glory: which glory of his being the higheſt deſign of his people,

all things must necessarily tend to their good, to that which they above all things desire and seek after. This God, who ruleth the World, is his peoples father, and doth what-ever he doth as a father for the good and advantage of his children.

3. Lastly, It is a good Argument of patience, *As it letteth them know, that their afflictions are ordered and governed by God.* The Afflictions, Oppressions, Persecutions of the people of God are not things excepted out of the Dominion of God. It was, you know, the Centurions faith, That diseases were to Christ, as his servants were to him: He said to one go, and he went; to another come, and he came; and to another do this, and he did it. So God speaketh to diseases; and not to diseases only, but to all sorts of afflictions: *Isa.* 27. 8, *In measure when it shooteth forth thou wilt debate with it.* God first causeth, then ruleth, and governeth all our troubles, afflictions and trials.

Fifthly, This Doctrine calleth to all the people of God *for love to him.* This is the Psalmists Exhortation, and upon this very Argument, *Psal.* 31. 23, *O Love you the Lord all you his Saints: for he preserveth his Saints, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.* All the earth is bound to love the Lord for the exercise of his Governing-power. If the Lord did not reign, the worst of men would quickly find the ill effects of it; they need no worse enemies than their own brethren and companions in wickedness, did the Lord lay the reins upon the necks of their lusts, and suffer them, as they would, to devour one another. For as we see the ravenous Birds, Fishes, and Beasts, do not only prey upon other, but their own species: so, were it not for the Restraining-Providence of God in governing the world, the wicked of it would see their brethren in iniquity, not only preying upon the Saints and people of God, but also upon those like unto themselves, if lesser than themselves. But, I say, above all the people of God, as being the least flock, are more especially bound to *love the Lord* for the Government of his Providence; but this will more eminently appear, when I come to discourse concerning the Specialties of his Providence with reference to them.

6. Lastly, This Doctrine calleth unto all *for a willing subjection and obedience unto God:* This is that which we call *holiness.*

lineſs. There are two Arguments ariſing out of the former diſcourſe, which ought to have a force here.

1. *Let us do what we will, God will be our Governour.* Let *Aſſyria* mean, or not mean ſo, he ſhall be the Lords Servant, and execute his pleaſure, and no more. *Pharaoh* may *huff* a little, and ask, *Who is the Lord, that he ſhould ſerve or obey him:* but God will at laſt be glorified on *Pharaoh*, and make him know his Kingdom is over all. God will diſappoint the *devices of the crafty*, ſo as their hands ſhall not find their enterpriſes. God will at laſt be glorified, and make all the wrath of man, at laſt, to praiſe him.

2. None ſhall be *rewarded by God*, or *be his favourites, but only ſuch as yield him, free, willing, and chearful obedience.* Let us do what we can, we cannot reſiſt his will; but unleſs our obedience be free, voluntary, and chearful, it ſhall never be rewarded by a juſt and righteous God. There is nothing more ordinary in the Prophets, than to read the denunciation of Gods judgments againſt *Aſſyria* and *Babylon*; which were yet Gods ſervants in executing vengeance upon the hypocritical and rebellious *Jews*. Let this therefore mind us to be obedient to to the will of God, freely, and willingly, and ſincerely, that ſo we may hear that joyful voice, *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant.* ——*Enter thou into thy maſters joy.*

A

DISCOURSE

Concerning

ACTUAL PROVIDENCE.

PART. II.

Concerning the Specialties of Providence.

1 Cor. IX. 9.

Doth God take care for Oxen?

I Have been for ſome time diſcourſing concerning Providence, that is, *Actual Providence*, which is nothing elſe but Gods *taking care for his creatures*, made (as you heard) *by the word of his power*. I have diſcourſed this care of God more *generally*, opening to you thoſe two more general Acts of God, by which this care is expreſſed. 1. *In preſerving of them.* 2. *In the rule and governance of them.* I have ſhewed you the workings of Divine Providence, in the *preſerving of his creatures in general*, in their Beings, and uſe of their ſeveral faculties with which he created them; of man in particular, conſidered ſingly, as an *individual*, or *in his Political capacity*; or, 3. In his *Spiritual capacity*, as the *ſubject of Divine Grace*. I have alſo diſcourſed generally, concerning the *Government of Divine Providence*; and by what *particular acts* God exerciſeth this Government,

vernment, and declareth *his Dominion* over all the Creatures which he hath made; but beſides the *general care* of God concerning all his Creatures, there is alſo a *ſpecial Providence.* For the beginning of a diſcourſe concerning that, I have made choice of this Text: *Doth God take care for Oxen?* (ſaith the Apoſtle). *Non eſt vox dubitantis* (ſaith *Pareus*), It is not the language of one that doubteth. The Apoſtle knew well enough that our Saviour had ſaid, That God *cloatheth the Lillies*, the graſs of the field; and that a *ſparrow* (though *two of them are ſold for a farthing*) *falleth not to the ground without the will of our heavenly father.* The words therefore only ſignifie an *inequal care*, viz. *That God taketh a greater and more ſpecial care* for ſome of his Creatures than he doth for others, and ſo it layeth a foundation for this Propoſition.

Prop. *That God exerciſeth a ſpecial Providence for, and concerning ſome of his creatures.* He taketh a general care concerning them all: but a more *ſpecial care* concerning ſome of them. That is *the* Propoſition which I ſhall handle in this method.

1. I ſhall ſhew you that *there is ſuch a ſpecial Providence*, i.e. though the Lord taketh a general care of all his Creatures, according to their natures; yet he taketh a more particular and ſpecial care concerning ſome more than others.

2. I will enquire, *Which of his Creatures they are, as to which he exerciſeth a ſpecial Providence; and concerning which he taketh ſuch a more eſpecial care?*

3. We will enquire by *what acts God exerteth, putteth forth, and declareth this his eſpecial care.*

4. Laſtly, *I will make ſome Application of the whole.*

1. That God doth exerciſe a more particular care in the *Preſervation* and *Government* of ſome of his Creatures than he doth of others, will appear,

1. By expreſs Scriptures which aſſert it.

2. By promiſes made to ſome, in which others are not concerned.

3. By experience and matter of fact.

1. By expreſs Scriptures: thus *Deut.* 11. 12, *Canaan* is called *a Land which the Lord careth for:* ſo *Matth.* 6. 30, *If God ſo cloath the graſs of the field, which to day is, and to morrow*

is cast into the Oven; Shall he not much more cloath you, O you of little faith? Matt. 10. 31. *Fear you not therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows*, ver. 29. Christ had let them know, that the Providence of God extended to the *sparrows*; two of them were sold for a farthing, but not one of them fell to the ground without God: but (saith he) you are better than many sparrows, God will more regard you, and take more care of you, 1 *Tim.* 4. 10, *He is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them who believe.* Psal. 33. *v.* 13, *He beholdeth all the sons of men:* but *Verse* 18, *The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him: upon them that hope in his mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive from famine:* so this Text, *Doth God* (saith the Apostle) *take care for Oxen?* or doth he say it *altogether for our sakes? for our sakes no doubt.* It is true, there are degrees and differences as to this *special Providence*, as I shall shew you hereafter: I am only, as yet, evincing the thing in general.

2. All the *promises of God* made to some men, not to others, are a proof of this; for what is a promise but the Revelation of Gods Will, to bestow some good things in the way of his Providence? so as, if there be any special promises, there must be a special Providence. Now there is none so meanly versed in the holy Scripture, that he is not aware of a multitude of promises in them, made to the people of God; promises that concern this life, and that also which is to come: the 91 *Psalm* is made up of such promises.

3. Lastly, *The experience of all times proves it*, that some have been preserved, upheld, directed and governed by a Providence, in a more special manner than others have been: So that none can modestly deny or doubt a special Providence. The next Question is,

Quest. 2. *Who are the objects of it?*

It is generally answered by Divines, that *reasonable creatures* are the objects only of special Providence. These are only *Angels* and *Men*: for the Specialty of *Divine Providence*, so far as they relate to *Angels*, as we know little of it, so neither doth the knowledg of it much concern us: of that therefore I shall say nothing, being not desirous to intrude into those things which man hath not seen. It is certain, that by the special Providence of God they are more eminently upheld, confirmed

firmed in their state of integrity, governed in their motions and actions by God, and that in a more eminent manner than other inferiour creatures: but I intend no discourse of that.

2. The second object of special Providence is *Man.* 1. *Mankind considered in the general.* All men and women are under more special acts of Providence, as to *Preservation* and *Government*, than the grass, or the beasts, the inanimate creatures, or the brute creatures: but neither shall I make this the subject of my discourse. The *Psalmist* speaks of man in the general, *Psal.* 8. 5, *Thou hast made him a little lower than the Angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his foot. All sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field.*

2. But Secondly, The *Church of God*, and more especially, those that are the *invisible part of it*, that glory not in appearance only, but in reality, and have not only a *name to live*, but live *indeed*, are the more eminent objects of special Providence. I say first,

1. *The whole visible Church*, by which, I mean, the whole body of people, whom God, by the Preaching of the Gospel, hath called out to an external profession, and visible owning of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Church of the *Jews* of old, (*Amos* 3. 2.); the whole body of that Nation circumcised, and visibly owning and serving the true God, were under more special Providence than all the world besides. The Christian Church is so. *Canaan of old was the land which God cared for*, and he hath a *Canaan* now; his whole Church which he doth care for, and for whom he exerciseth a more special Providence, both in the preservation and Government of them.

2. But yet the *invisible part* of the *visible Church*, that is, that number of Professors, whose Profession is not only visible to men, (*Psal.* 33. 18), but their faith, their sincerity, their true holiness is seen by God, who love and fear the great God in truth and holiness; these are the most special objects of special Providence. Only one thing let me more add, in an answer to this Question; that neither all *mankind*, not *members of the Church*, nor all *Churches*, nor all *Saints* are under the same, or equal influences of Providence; and therefore Divines have distinguished *special Providences* into those which are more *extra-*

ordinary or *ordinary:* the former are more miraculous, or little differing from miracles: the latter are more equal and ordinary; and so will be the more the subject of our discourse. All men are not restrained as *Abimelech* was. All *Churches* are not preserved *in a red Sea, a wilderness*; have not *Manna* rained from heaven to feed them, nor *Waters* brought out of a rock to satisfie their thirst, as the *Jewish* Church had. All Saints are not taken up to Heaven in a fiery Chariot as *Elijah*, nor preserved in the Lions Den as *Daniel*, or in the fire as the *three children*. But there is, 1. A special Providence attends every visible Church of Christ. 2. And *every one who is a true believer*, and puts his trust in the Lord. I come more particularly to shew you, by what more particular acts the Providence of God discovereth Gods special care, for his Church, and for particular Souls.

Quest. 3. *By what more particular acts doth the Providence of God discover Gods special care for the visible Church, and for particular believing souls.*

1. As to the *Church of God.*

1. *He preserveth it so as it shall never perish.* You know the promise: *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matt. 16. 18. God preserveth the individual Being of every particular man, *He holdeth our souls in life*, but yet his being shall fail: there will come a time when he shall not be. *Our Prophets are gone, our fathers where are they?* God preserveth the Beings of *Polities*, the *Kingdoms* and *Empires* of the World; but these also have their periods: where are the great Empires of the *Medes* and *Persians*, the *Grecians*, the *Romans*, &c? He so preserveth his Church, that it shall never fail; this is a *Specialty of Providence*. Men shall dye, *Kingdomes* shall dye, *Empires* shall come to nothing: the *Church shall not dye*. This *woman* may *flee into the Wilderness* from the *red dragon*, (as in *Rev.* 12. *Where she hath a place prepared of God*; but there she shall *be fed* 1260 *days:* the *earth* shall *help the woman*, Rev. 12. 16. Christ will be with them to the end of the world: God so preserveth, no creatures, no Polities, no Societies of men whatsoever.

2. A *second specialty of Providence* relating to the Church, seems to be a special *Ministry of Angels*, Heb. 2. 14, *Are they not*

not all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who are heirs of salvation? Who are those that are heirs of salvation, but the Church of God? *Acts* 2. 47, *And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.* 1 Cor. 11. 10, *The woman ought to have power over her head* (or a covering over head) *because of the Angels.* There have been many Divines, who have thought that in the Government of Providence, some particular Angels have the charge of particular Kingdoms, and Provinces, and Churches. You read, *Dan.* 10. 12, *The Prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty one days: but lo, Michael one of the chief Princes came to help me:* and *ver.* 21, *There is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your Prince.* There are some also that interpret thus; The *Angels* of the *Asian* Churches mentioned in the *Revelation* (but most interpret them of the Pastors over them): but certain it is, the Angels (whether one more specially or no) have a special Ministry towards the Church of Christ. *Psalm* 91. 11, *He shall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* I shall not enlarge upon this: for though this seemeth to be plainly enough in Scripture revealed, yet the particulars of their Ministration are not so clearly revealed, as we can assert much distinctly concerning them. *Dan.* 12. 1, *At that time* (saith the Prophet) *shall Michael stand up, the great Prince, which standeth for the children of thy people.* The Angels stand up for the Church; that is a Specialty of Providence.

3. Thirdly, *All Gods extraordinary acts in the Government of his Creatures have been for his Church.* It was in revenge of their oppressions, that God sends ten plagues one after another upon *Pharaoh:* it is for them he suspendeth the Laws of Nature, for them the waters of the Red-sea, then the waters of *Jordan* divide: for them it was that the Sun stood still in *Gibeon*, and the Moon in the Valley of *Ajalon*, in the time of *Joshuah*; That the *earth opened*, Numb. 16, and swallowed up *Corah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram:* It is for his Church that natural Beings have acted beyond their ordinary capacities: Hail-stones are made so big, as falling down upon their Enemies-heads, they killed more than his peoples swords. At the sound of Rams-horns, the walls of *Jericho* fall down. It is for this people that the clouds rain down bread, and the Rock gusheth out water. There was no people, that God so *assayed to take from the midst of another Nation.*

tion by temptations, by signs and wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terrors, Deut. 4. 34: and although God hath not been so seen in miraculous operations for his Gospel-Church: yet how often hath one chased ten, ten an hundred, an hundred a thousand, and a thousand put ten thousand to flight? There have been no such instances in the World of the Providence of God, working for the salvation and deliverance of Heathens, as of that body of his people, which are his Church: or of Gods workings in a miraculous manner for the preservation of others, as of that his *little flock*.

4. But 4thly, It is a great *specialty of Providence*, that unto this people are *committed the Oracles of God*; they are the only people which have *the ordinary means of salvation*. This is that *Much advantage every way* (as the Apostle speaketh) which the *Jews* had, *Rom.* 4. 2: *because unto them were committed the Oracles of God*. It hath been a question, *Whether God giveth unto all sufficient means for salvation*. Some affirm it, others with better reason deny it; at length some of the Patrons for it, are forced to yield, That none but the *Church hath sufficient means*. *In Judah is God known*: in the Church Christ is preached; the glad tidings of salvation are published; the Heathens have only the light of Nature, a light sufficient (if not walked up to) to make them inexcusable, but by no means sufficient to direct men to Heaven: it sheweth men nothing of Christ, and there is no other Name under Heaven but the Name *of Jesus by which we can be saved, neither is there salvation in any other*. Christ is only ordinarily preached in the Church of God. This is a great Priviledg, a great Specialty of Providence towards the Church of God.

But yet, *There is a more special Providence attends the members of the invisible Church, particular Saints*, and that is plain from the *Promises of God in Scripture*. There are indeed many Promises which concern the whole visible Church; but the most of the Promises are made unto Godliness: the Apostle tells us, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8, that *hath great promises* both of *this life*, and *a life to come*: and as the great variety of Promises evinceth a *special providence* in the preservation and government of them; so also Gods Dispensations upon those Promises do abundantly evince it: but let me open it in a few particulars.

1. *It*

1. *It is for them that God ordinarily goeth out of the common road of his Providence for their preservation:* Thus *Daniel* is preserved in the Lions Den; *The three Children* in the fiery Furnace; *Moses* in a little ark of Bul-rushes; *Noah*, when the whole World was swallowed up in a Deluge of waters: they are those that dwell in the secret place of the most High, that shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; these he delivereth from the snare of the Fowler, and from the noisom Pestilence; and to whom all the Promises are made, *Psalm* 91. I do not say, but others may sometimes meet with strange and miraculous preservations, but the instances of them are rarer. The Promises are not made to them, they can expect no such thing, and usually it is for the sake of such as fear God: indeed these Providences are not the portion of all the children of God. God will have us know that these are not *the good things which he hath prepared for them that love him:* though the power and goodness of God shall be thus declared for some of them, yet it shall not be so for all, that we may not think them the Believers portion; but *things* which God addeth unto them, who are the heirs of salvation, and seek first the Kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof.

2. These are those, whom *God gives special warnings to of evils to come, and whom he prompts to hide themselves.* What saith *God? Shall I hide from Abraham, the thing I intend to do to Sodom? Noah being warned of God, prepared an Ark* (saith the Apostle); you know what a warning *Lot* had of the destruction of *Sodom*. They tell us of a Voice which the godly *Jews* heard a little before the fatal destruction of *Jerusalem*, *Ite Pellam*, Go away to *Pella*. It is true, those extraordinary warnings are much now ceased; but *the Providence of* God yet continues. God told *David*, that *the men of Keilah would deliver him up*. God gives warning still by secret impressions upon the spirits of his people, by causing them more steadily than others to believe the threatnings of his Word, and to give credit to his Ministers speaking from him. These *secrets of the Lord*, are mostly *with them that fear him*, while simple wicked men will believe nothing, take no warning at any thing; but pass on, and are punished.

3. For these it is, that he commandeth *inanimate creatures* to move for their service; *The stones of the field shall be at peace with them:* the Sun, the Moon shall serve them, the stars shall

fight

fight against *Sisera* in their order. The dust shall fly in the face of their Enemies: The winds shall serve them;

——— *tibi militat æther,*
Et conjurati veniunt ad classica venti,

saith the Poet of that eminent Christian Emperour. But I have touched a little upon this under the first Head.

4. For these (fourthly it is) that *God commandeth the sensitive creatures that they shall not hurt them, that they shall serve them:* the Lions shall not hurt *Daniel*; it is to them the Promise is made. *Psalm* 91. 13, *Thou shalt tread upon the Lion, and the Adder, and the Dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet.* It is a famous story of that Protestant in the *Parisian massacre*, that was saved by a *Spider*, that had woven a web before the entrance of a hole, in which he hid himself from the murtherers that sought his life; which made them conclude, that he was not there.

5. For these it is, that *he bridleth the rage of wicked and ungodly men:* The Providence of God (if I may say so) hath its hardest task with wicked men. These alone have an enmity to Gods people: there is, and ever will be an implacable Enmity between the seed of the Woman and the seed of the Serpent. God holds them in as we hold in an unruly Horse with bit and bridle, and oftentimes of Enemies they are made friends. *Gallio* stands up, and pleadeth for them. *Cyrus* becomes Gods servant for the deliverance of the *Jews*. *Nebuchadnezzar* shall be a friend to *Daniel*; *Darius* to *Nehemiah*. *Paul* shall meet with Friends in the Court of *Nero*.

6. For these it is, that *he over-ruleth the most malitious actions of men: Surely* (saith the *Psalmist*) *the wrath of man shall praise thee*; *and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain: Hamans* malice shall issue in the exaltation of *Mordecai*, and the further establishment of the *Jews*. *Josephs brethren* shall sell him into *Egypt*, intending him nothing but evil; the issue of it shall be the exaltation of *Joseph*, and the keeping much people alive. But, as I said before concerning these matters which relate to this life, though the people of God can only claim a right in these Promises, and be those to whom they generally are fulfilled, not to others: yet you must not be mistaken to think, that all the people of God shall have them made good to them. God as to these Dispensations, dealing out (as in other things of outward Providence)

vidence) according to his own good pleaſure; regulated by his infinite Wiſdom, working for the glory of his holy Name, and for the good of his people.

7thly, There is a ſpecial Providence of God extended towards all thoſe that truly fear and love God. *In the giving to them the things that accompany ſalvation, and preſerving and upholding in them thoſe habits of grace; by the operations of which, they are made fit for the inheritance of the Saints in light.* Grace is the only creature of God, which God preſerveth that it ſhall not die; but yet it is preſerved alive by the power of God. *Natural habits* may periſh; *Moral habits* may be extinguiſhed; *Gracious habits* are the ſeed of God, which do not die: *he ſhall be holden up, for God is able to make him to ſtand*, Rom. 14. 4. Now this is a piece of Providence common to all the Saints, and *ſpecial* and peculiar to them.

8thly, The ſpecial Providence of God to his people, is eminently ſeen in this, *That all things work together for their good:* You know the Text, *Rom.* 8. 28, *And we know that all things work together for the good of them that love God, who are called according to his purpoſe.* There is another Text much of the ſame import, poſſibly of a larger extent, *1 Cor.* 3. 21, *All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the World, or life, or death, or things preſent, or things to come: all are yours, and you are Chriſts, and Chriſt is Gods.* The former Text chiefly reſpects *ſufferings:* the ſufferings and afflictions of Gods people are for their good. The latter reſpecteth *Ordinances*, but both of them have the univerſal particle *All: All things are yours; All things work together for good:* and whether either of thoſe Texts reſpect ſins or no (which indeed are hardly to be counted into the number of *things*) I will not ſay; yet moſt certain it is, that by the over-rulings of Divine Providence, even the ſins of Gods people work together for their good. *What fear* (ſaith the Apoſtle), What *ſorrow*? what *jealouſie*, what *revenge* do they work? How low do they make the child of God in his own Eyes? How do they contribute to a poor, broken and contrite ſpirit in him? What care and watchfulneſs do they produce in him for the time to come? It is the miſery of a wicked man, all things work together for his hurt: if he hath Riches, Honour, worldly enjoyments, or croſſes, trials, afflictions, *all things are againſt him.* God gives the *Iſraelites*, rebelling and murmuring,

Quales in his wrath, and a King *in his wrath*; and God gives others *Riches*, honours, wives, children, all in his wrath; all things are againſt them: but now if a man be a child of God, all things are his; all things are for him, for his good and advantage.

Ninthly, (which indeed ſhould have been mentioned firſt), *God* giveth his *good Angels charge concerning them:* The good Angels have not only a Miniſtry to the Church, which I touched before, but they have a Miniſtry as to every individual Believer. It is a Promiſe made, *Pſalm* 91. 11, to every one: *who, ver.* 1. *dwelleth in the ſecret of the moſt High*; *He ſhall give his Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways: they ſhall bear thee up in their hands, leſt thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone*, ver. 12. *Heb.* 1. 14, *Are they not all miniſtring ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation?* and therefore they are called *Their Angels*. Matth. 18. 10, *Take heed that you deſpiſe not one of theſe little ones: for I ſay unto you that in Heaven, their Angels always behold the face of my father which is in Heaven.* It hath been the opinion of ſome, and thoſe very eminent Divines, That every child of God hath his *particular Angel*, uſually called his *Tutelar Angel*, or Angel-guardian. They have builded this Notion upon thoſe probable Texts, *Acts* 12. 23: where the Chriſtians met, told the Maid concerning *Peter*, *It is his Angel*. Gen. 48. 16, where *Jacob* prays, That *the Angel* who had redeemed *him from all evil would bleſs the lads, Joſephs* children: and *Matth.* 18. 10. I ſhall not meddle with that nice Queſtion; thoſe who deſire to read what is to be read for it, or what may be ſaid, may find it in Mr. *Dingles* judicious Diſcourſe of the *Deputation of Angels:* certain it is, that the Angels have a ſpecial Miniſtry with reference to the heirs of ſalvation: certain it is, that *they ſhall bear them up in their hands* (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſaith) that they *ſhall not daſh their feet againſt a ſtone: that they ſhall keep them in all their ways.* What power they have *to make impreſſions upon their minds*, I cannot determine; but probable it is, that as *evil angels* have a power to *tempt* and ſollicit to evil: ſo the *good Angels* do often move, and ſollicit (by way of ſecret impreſſions) the ſouls of the Saints to that which is good. Certain it is, this is a Specialty of Divine Providence with reference to the Saints; therefore our Saviour calleth them, *their Angels*. The Angels pull'd *Lot* out of *Sodom*, Gen. 19. 16:

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they appeared to *Jacob* in his journey to *Padan-aram*, Gen. 28. 12: they met him again at *Mahanaim*, Gen. 32. 1, 2. The *Pſalmiſt* telleth us, *Pſalm* 34. 7, *They encamp about him that feareth the Lord.* An Angel attends *Elias*, moveth him to eat, 1 *Kings* 19. 7; appeared for *Eliſha*, 2 *Kings* 6. 17. In ſhort, much is ſpoken in Scripture concerning the Miniſtry of Angels, for the good of the people of God; though much alſo of their Miniſtration be, doubtleſs, unknown to us: *Scriptura piis tantum Angelorum cuſtodiam, & miniſterium tribuit, impiis non item* (ſaith a grave Author). But I ſhall add no more to the Explicatory part of this Diſcourſe, having touched moſt of the Specialties of Divine Providence; with reference both to the Church, and to particular believing Souls. If any thing be further needful for the proof of this: what need we do any more, than take a view of the Church of God in the ſeveral periods of it, and of the number of ſincere and pious Souls in any age of the World? The *Church of God* from the beginning hath been either *Jewiſh*, *or Chriſtian.* For the *Jewiſh* Church he that runneth may read it in the whole ſtory of the Old Teſtament; *Moſes* makes a large recapitulation, *Deut.* 1. *ch.* 2. *ch.* 3, and *ch.* 4; and the very bent of his Diſcourſe is to ſhew the eminent ſpecial Providences of God for them, above all other people and Nations upon the Earth. In ſhort, the whole ſtory of the *Jewiſh* Church after *Moſes* his time, until Chriſts coming, is all but an eminent proof of this Doctrine. After Chriſts coming and aſcenſion, the Chriſtian Church was formed, encompaſſed with Enemies on all hands; the *Jews* on one hand, the *Heathens* on the other. The *Jews* power indeed was not much: they were at firſt under the power of the *Romans*, and in a few years utterly deſtroyed by them; but the *Heathens* over-ſpread the World. The *Roman* Empire was then in its glory; They were full of *Philoſophers* and *learned men*, to whom the Goſpel appear'd no better than fooliſhneſs; They were eſtabliſhed and rooted in Idolatry, and very jealous of their Religion. The *Chriſtian Church* began with twelve men, moſt of them *Fiſhermen:* one indeed (a learned man) *Paul* was afterwards added to them: What think you, muſt there not a great deal of *ſpecial Providence* be ſhewed to preſerve this little flock? theſe few men ſent out to plant the Goſpel over all the World; that they ſhould go, and in deſpight both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, ſpread the Goſpel over all the World. It is true, there

were great persecutions, great havock made by the Enemies of the Church amongst them for three hundred years; but this still evidenceth the more special Providence of God, watching over them, working with them; that though they did what they could to blow out this light, and had all the power in the World on their side; yet neither the Philosophers, and Orators of the World, with their *Philosophy* and *Rhetorick*, could argue and perswade the World from this New Doctrine; nor all the force and rage they could use, could fright the World from it, nor root it out of the World; neither destroy all the Ministers, nor root out all the professors, but a number should be left in all places: and after three hundred years, an Emperour should arise that should establish the Christian Religion, and make it obtain in all places. It is true, after this the Christian Church degenerated, admitted foul Heresies, Idolatry and Superstition; and it became with the Christian Church, as it was with the *Jewish* Church in the days of *Elijah*, Prophets were hid in caves; *Elija* complained he was left alone; yet God had his *seven thousand in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal: nor kissed him with their lips.* Antichristianism had so prevailed in the Christian Church; that the sincere and true Professors were few. A *few in the valleys of Piedmont*; A few in *Germany*, who stuck to the truth: did it not argue a great and special Providence of God to watch over *these* few, keeping them, that they were not swallowed up by their numerous adversaries? *Luther* began the Reformation in *Germany*, and began it almost alone: One poor man against all the power of *Rome*: God preserved him alive, prospered his works in his hands. Indeed this Doctrine of special Providence needeth no other proof, than what might be afforded it from the story of that great man; who considering what he did, and with what an undaunted spirit and courage he did it, lived almost every day by a Miracle, and yet went down to the grave in peace in a good old age, *like a shock of corn in its season* (as *Job* speaketh). For particular instances of the special Providence of God towards particular Saints; the time would fail me to tell you the particular stories of *Abraham. Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, David:* and there is hardly any child of God living, but will find it in the records of his own life, that hath been *preserved* more than other men. There is no truth more wrote with a Sun-beam, than this great truth of Special Providence is.

Now

Now if any man ask me the reason of it, it is enough to say, *So it pleased God.* God is free in these, as in other of his dispensations: but yet let me shew you the reasonableness of these more particular and special Providences.

1. It hath been an old Observation, That *Gods Providence is most eminently exercised about the noblest of his Creatures, Angels,* and *Men:* but I know not how to make this Notion out. The Angels are more noble creatures than men, spiritual substances, of vaster capacities; according to this observation they should be the more the objects of special Providence: but I say, I doubt this. I am sure there was one great act of *special Providence,* in which the Angels were not concerned: Christ did not take upon him the nature of Angels, but the seed of *Abraham.*

2. But Secondly, Of the whole Creation *Angels* and Men are those creatures, whom in Creation he was pleased most to fit, and capacitate for the great ends of his glory, for an active, designed, glorifying of his holy name. Let me open this a little.

1. *The great end of all the actions of God, is his own glory.* The wise man tells us, *That the Lord made all things for himself,* Prov. 16. 4. Indeed, if we wisely consider the thing, it must be so; every rational agent worketh for some end, and his reasonable nature constraineth him to work *for the best end.* God is the highest reasonable agent; and as he can do nothing in vain, but for some end, so he cannot but act for a *good end,* and for the *best end.* Now this could be no other than himself, his own honour and glory: so that as the Apostle saith of Gods swearing, *because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself:* so we must *say of Gods working;* because he could work for no better, no higher end than his own glory, therefore he wrought for himself: whatsoever he did he did for his own honour and glory. Now (as I have said before),

2. If we diligently consider it, God cannot be otherwise glorified by his Creatures, than *by their prædication and publication of his honour and glory.* The essential glory of God is neither capable of augmentation, nor of diminution; no creature can add any thing unto that. Now look,

Thirdly, As *a man may be honoured mutely,* or more *livelily*; so may God. For example. A Limner draweth a curious piece, which

which is exposed to view; he gets a great deal of honour, credit and repute by it: the Picture is a dead mute thing, and hath no *voice* to praise its maker by, nor any understanding or will to praise him from any intention, and design, and choice; yet it honoureth him: the Workmanship and Art of it gives the Limner a repute to all that view it. We will now suppose this Limner to have two Sons, both excellently bred up in Arts and Sciences, &c. but the one a rude debaucht fellow, rebellious to his father, yet a man of parts; and as he sheweth his breeding and education upon any subject, he honoureth his Father. But the other *Son is dutiful, loves his Parent*, makes it his business to commend him to all: you will say, That this Limner, though he receiveth some honour from his mute and dead Picture, and some honour from his rude and rebellious Son, yet the dutiful Son is he who bringeth most honour and repute to the Father. This is the case betwixt God and his Creatures; God hath made the *Sun*, the *Moon*, the *Stars*, the *Earth*, the *Seas*; the Whales, the Lions, and Elephants, the Eagles, the little Silk-worms: all these are pieces of the Divine Workmanship, all give honour and glory to God; but it is done mutely and passively. *The vile and wicked men of the world*, that are *rebels against God*, yet give a glory to God. The structure of their bodies, the endowments of their minds, honour God, who made them, and gave them those excellent features, qualities and endowments. God useth them (some of their vile and malitious actions) to bring about his wise and glorious ends; but God doth but, as it were, extort his glory from them: But now, *the people of God*, out of choice, and design, and by a voluntary act and constant study give honour and glory to him. Obedience is better than sacrifice; doing of his will is more acceptable to him than burnt-offerings. The glory God hath in Heaven from Angels, and the Souls of just men made perfect, is from their *voluntary* praising of him, and doing of his will: therefore we pray, *Thy will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.* Now I pray observe,

Fourthly, *Angels and men are the only creatures capable of an active, voluntary, designed, glorifying of God:* The Heavens, and in them the Sun, the Moon, the Stars glorifie God, but they know it not; they are inanimate creatures, not capable of knowledg. The brute creatures act not from any principle

of

of reason, they have no rational nature; and though God hath glory from them, yet it is not from any principle within them: so that Angels and Men being rational Beings, have a further capacity to serve the Lords great end in bringing glory to God, than all the Inanimate Creatures; yea, than all the vegetative or sensitive Creatures in the World.

Fifthly, Amongst men, *The whole Church of God in the general, is that body of people, where there is any voluntary glorifying of God: Psal.* 29. 9, *In his temple doth every one speak of his glory.* The whole visible Church bringeth *an active glory to God:* it is the *Pillar* upon which his *Proclamations* of *truth* and *grace* are hung forth to the view of the World: *Psal.* 76. 1, *His name is great in Israel.* In the Church, whether in truth or in sincerity, all men glorifie God by a professed subjection to his Ordinances, and an outward owning of him.

Sixthly, But Lastly, God is most *eminently glorified by his Saints.*

1. They do it most *heartily*, *steadily*, and *fully*. What hypocrites do they do in a meer shew and outward appearance. As they *glory in appearance*, so they *glorifie God* but in appearance, from the teeth outward, as we say; there is nothing of heart, design, and choice in it: they indeed glorifie God, but we may say of their honouring and glorifying of God, as the Prophet said, *Isa.* 10. 7, of *Assyria's* serving God, *Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so*; but it is the godly mans choice, design, study, and he doth it more *steadily*: the hypocrite is *in* and *out*; he glorifieth God one hour, by confessing his sins, putting up prayers to him, reading his word, singing his praise, and spits in the face of God the next hour, by *swearing*, and *cursing*, and *blaspheming*, by drunkenness and disobedience; and the godly man glorifieth God *most fully*: the hypocrites action is but the action of his *outward man*; he doth not glorifie God as the godly man doth in *body*, and *mind*, and *spirit*.

2. Godly men glorifie God *sincerely*: so do no hypocrites, no *formal professors*. All hypocrites aim at themselves, they do what they do, (as our Saviour said of the *Pharisees*), πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι, to be seen of men: the godly man driveth no such designs, nor hath a squint-eye in his actions, which appear to be directed to the glory of God: the glory of God is the first, the main of his design.

3. Lastly,

3. Lastly, The *godly man* is he alone *whom the Lord hath set apart for himself*; whom he intendeth to take up into Heaven to pursue the great end of his glory to all eternity.

Now the *glory of God*, being the great end to which he directeth all the general and particular acts, both of his preserving, and of his Governing-Providence; it from hence appeareth exceeding reasonable, that *Providence* should work both in *preserving* and in governing the world by these different degrees, and with these Specialties which I have shewed you. God is more glorified by men, than either by inanimate creatures, or by any vegetative or sensitive creatures. More by that body of men called his Church, than by Heathens amongst whom his name is not known. More yet by godly men, whom he hath set apart for himself, and who steadily, designedly, heartily, sincerely set themselves to pursue the great design of his glory, than by any hypocrites and formal professors: therefore it is but reasonable, they should in their degrees be cared for, preserved and governed by God in a more special and eminent manner. But I shall add no more to the Doctrinal part of this discourse. The Application still remains for the subject of further discourse.

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SERMON XI.

1 Cor IX. 9.

Doth God take care for Oxen?

I Am come now to the Application of my former Diſcourſe. You have heard that God doth not only exerciſe ſome general acts of Providence in the *preſervation* and *government of all his creatures*, but ſome ſpecial acts of Providence, in the preſervation and government of ſome creatures in a more particular and eminent manner. Though God doth take a care for *Oxen*, yet he doth not take *ſuch a care* for *Oxen* as he doth for *Angels*, for *men*, and amongſt the children of men, particularly for *the members of his Church, and amongſt them for ſuch as are not ſo only in an external viſible profeſſion, but in truth and ſincerity*; they are under the higheſt Specialties and care of Divine Providence. The Doctrine of Gods Special Providence concerning Angels, and mankind in the general, and the *Polities* and Societies of men, I much paſſed over. The former being much a ſecret to us, and not much concerning us: and my Diſcourſe being not amongſt Heathens, but to a Congregation, which univerſally is within the pale of the *viſible Church*. I therefore moſt enlarged upon the Specialties of *Divine Providence* (as you know) with reference to the *Church of God, and thoſe in it who truly fear God*; accordingly I ſhall ſute my Application.

Uſe 1. In the firſt place, Let this *inſtruct all that hear me this day* in the *Reaſon*, *That God hath this day a Church in the world*: and alſo confirm *them, that notwithſtanding all the appearances of hoſtility*

ſtility againſt it, yet God will have a Church to the end of the world. Whoſo conſidereth the Church of God this day, eſpecially the *Reformed Church*, and looks back upon it, even from the commencement of its Reformation, cannot but fancy it, as *Noahs Ark in the midſt of raging waters, every moment threatning to ſwallow it up*; like *Moſes* his ark of Bulruſhes, ready to be waſhed away at the return of every tide; like the *Burning buſh* which *Moſes* ſaw all *on fire*, yet *not conſumed.* You ſhall find the Reaſon why it is not ſo in the 46 *Pſalm* (a *Pſalm* which *Luther* was wont often to call for in his troubleſom time); *God is our refuge and ſtrength, a preſent help in trouble*, Ver. 5, *God is in the midſt of her:* The Lord of Hoſts is with *her*; *the God of Jacob is our refuge: he breaketh the bow, he cutteth the ſpear in ſunder; he burneth the chariots in the fire.* Papiſts call for *Miracles*, as a Note of the true Church; ſee here a Miracle: Was it not a Miracle that *Luther*, a poor *Friar*, renouncing his former Superſtition, and bidding an open defiance to the *Pope* and the whole power of *Rome*, in ſuch a time when all the World was admiring, or fearing the Beaſt, and ſo boldly and freely oppoſing himſelf to them, as he did, and falling upon them in a point of profit, ſhould not only go through all his bold attempts, and die in peace; but alſo draw unto him ſo many learned men, and prevail ſo far amongſt the people, as that in very many, if not in moſt parts of *Germany*, the Doctrine of the Goſpel ſhould prevail, the *Maſs* and *Popiſh worſhip* ſhould be aboliſhed, and the Truth contrary to the Doctrine of *Rome* ſhould be received? Was there not a ſpecial Providence (think you) watched over them? Next to the preſervation of the Apoſtles, and the ſucceeding of them to the firſt plantation of the Goſpel in the World, there hath not been a more eminent and conſpicuous work of ſpecial and miraculous Providence than in Gods preſerving and ſucceeding the works of Reformation; by which the *Doctrine* of Chriſt, and Worſhip inſtituted by him, was reſtored in a great meaſure to that Primitive integrity and purity, which the great Lord of the Goſpel firſt inſtituted. And a due meditation of this Doctrine of *ſpecial Providence, may alſo ſecure the hearts of the people of God againſt their fears, for the prevailing of the Churches enemies againſt it.* Their fears can ariſe but from the proſpect of the multitude, and rage of the Churches enemies: and their judgment is but a judgment of *probability*, made from the more common and ordinary

workings of Providence: but this judgment proceeds upon a false Hypothesis, *viz. That Gods way of Providence as to his Church*, is but an ordinary road, and such as he *keepeth towards other men.* Now this is false; God in his workings for his Church, keepeth not the beaten-road of his Providence. *Zion* hath a special Providence, watching over it: *The eyes of the Lord are upon it from one end of the year to the other. Canaan* is the Land that God careth for; *God is known in the places of his Church for a refuge; For lo the Kings were assembled, they passed by together; they saw it, and so they marvelled, they were troubled and hasted away: Fear took hold upon them there, and pain as on a woman in travel.* Psalm 48. 3, 4, 5, 6, *God will establish it for ever.* Ver. 8, *Watch about Sion* (saith the *Psalmist*) *and go round about her; tell the towers thereof: mark you well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that you may tell it to the generations following: for this God is our God for ever, and ever: he will be our guide until death.* We have lived to see as bold and impudent attaques made upon the Church, as to that part of it that hath been studious of the stricter and severer practice of Holiness, as possibly later ages have known. If Christians could have been swagger'd and hector'd out of the practice of Holiness, or *jeer'd* and *drolled* out of it; or threatned and frighted, or cudgel'd out of it, there have been arguments enough of this nature used: but how little have they done? how few are less in love with the good, and holy ways of God than before? Having therefore so many great and precious Promises for the preservation of the Church, and God exercising a special care for it, and keeping it under a special tutelage; Let us not fear, but believe that *God* (as the *Psalmist* saith) *will establish it for ever.* Let us therefore look off *creature-appearances* and *humane-probabilities.* The Church is a *burning-bush*, and hath been so from the very first plantation of it: but we see it is not consumed, because God is in the midst of it. Remember this, That the Church liveth not upon an ordinary, common, general Providence, but upon a *special peculiar Providence*; watching over it, and caring for it.

In the next place, this may serve to shew you your duty: every one to observe *the special Providences that attend your lives.* There is an *observation* of the more *general Providence* of God in *upholding* and *governing the World*; which is our duty, and a very *Use 2.*

ry ſweet and advantageous piece of duty; (but this I ſhall hereafter further preſs upon you). That which I would ſpeak a few words to here, is the obſervation of the *ſpecial Providence* of God *relating to you*. What the *Pſalmiſt* ſaith of the obſervations of Providence more generally, *Pſalm* 107, the laſt verſe; *Whoſo obſerveth theſe things is wiſe, and he ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord*, is eminently true. Here it ſpeaks, 1. *A Spiritual wiſdom.* 2. *It will be of great uſe to make us underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.* Obſerve the *ſpecial Providences* of God towards his Church; his Church in former ages, his Church in our preſent age: you will by thoſe obſervations be able to make up a judgment what man is like to do againſt it; and what God is like yet to do for that body of people that come under that Notion: nay, you will be able to go a great way in making up a Judgment, who they are that make up the true Church of God; even thoſe upon whom the Eye of God is moſt, and for whom his Arm is moſt ſtretched out; not in this or that particular act, but in a continued ſeries and courſe of ſtrange preſervations. There is, and indeed always hath been a great diſpute in the World, which is the true Church of God. The *Jews* arrogated the honour to themſelves; and indeed there was a time when none could claim with them: but the Apoſtle amply declareth their *rejection*, and the *Gentiles* ingraffing. But though it be certain now, that the *Church of God* is made up of thoſe that were *Gentiles*; yet as ſeveral Sects and parties have riſen up amongſt them, ſo they have had an ambition ſtill to arrogate this Name to themſelves. The *Arians* would be the only Church; ſince that, the *Papiſts*: the *Proteſtants* think they have the beſt claim, and great diſputes there are for this *Honourable Title*. I will not ſay this will determine the cauſe, but it will go a great way. That body of people profeſſing Chriſt, againſt whom *the gates of Hell cannot prevail*, Matth. 16. 18. In the midſt of which God appears to be by a more ſpecial powerful Protection, keeping it that it ſhall not fall: *Pſalm* 46. 5, *That people which the Lord keepeth and watereth every moment, leſt any ſhould hurt it, keeping it night and day*, Iſa. 27. 3. That people *round about whom the Lord is as the mountains are round about Jeruſalem.* Pſalm 125, *v.* 2, Who can ſay, as *Pſalm* 124, *If it had not been the Lord who was on our ſide: If it had not been the Lord, who was on our ſide: when men roſe up againſt us, then they had ſwallowed us*

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up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: Then the waters had over-whelmed us, the proud waters had gone over our souls. I say, that people amongst those that lay claim to the honourable Title of the *Church of God*, seem to have the best claim; for it is the Church for which God exerciseth a *special Providence:* I will not say, This alone will prove any party the true Christian Church; but where-ever we see a people professing faith in Jesus Christ, holding the Doctrine of the Gospel; crying, *To the Law and to the Testimony* for the trial of her *Doctrine, Worship* and *Discipline*, and God watching over this people, strangely preserving, multiplying and encreasing them; using the ministry of his Word amongst them, to convert and build up Souls, delivering them in a constant series and succession of Providence from their Enemies, far more and more mighty than they are, we may join our selves to them: The anointed of the Lord, the Church of the true and living God is doubtless before us. Though these *special Providences* will not make an argument alone, yet they are a far better argument than the *Popish pedegree* they pretend to in a succession from St. *Peter*, or *Antiquity*, or their *pretended Unity*, or *Miracles*, indeed rather to be called *lying wonders.* I know no promises of these things to the Church to the end of the World; but I know many promises for *special Providence* attending them. And certainly, that Body of Christian people called *Protestants:* I mean, that people in all the parts of the World, that are now called by that name (for the name beareth date but from the *German Reformation*): but I say, that Body of people united in their *Doctrine and Worship*, can lay the faireſt claim to this of any others. No people hath been more strangely preserved than they: witness those in the valleys of *Piedmont* and *Lucerne*, and *Bohemia*; none more strangely preserved, nor whose number hath been more strangely encreased, nor their Doctrines more strangely prevailed. A Christian by observing which way *special Providence* hath most moved, may get much wisdom, and much help himself in making a judgment *which is the true Church.* 2. Yea, and he *may also much help himself in judging of those in the World, who are the true Saints and people of God*; who they are that *dwell in the secret of the most High*, as the *Psalmist* speaketh; for they generally *abide under the* more *particular shadow of the Almighty.* It is true, there are some rare instances of persons that walk close with God, whom yet God followeth with

with a series of *severe Providences*; such an instance was *Job*, and such particular instances we see in our time, to let us know, that outward prosperity is not the Saints portion: God hath provided some better things for his people. But take now any considerable number of people in any City or Place, that (so far as we can judg) walk more close with God, and in a more strict observation of his law than others do; and oppose these to a like number of persons in that place, that give a liberty to their lusts, and walk by no such rule: and observe number for number, who are most under the special Providence of God, preserving them from dangers and in dangers; who are most blessed with special Providences, as to length of life, health, &c. you will remember, that I told you, we must abate for particular instances of Gods own people, whom he picks out, to make examples of faith and patience, and to be his witnesses unto the world in a time of trial. Who observeth not how strangely God preserveth and blesseth some people that fear him, and walk closely with him? and I do believe the observation will justifie it self, concerning any considerable number of such persons compared with a like number of others. So that although none can conclude himself, or herself, a child of God, from some particular special Providence, no not from a series and course of them; yet where men and women walk close with God, Gods *special Providences* attending them, will much evidence, even to others, that they are not hypocritical in their professions.

2. But secondly, The observation of Gods *special Providences* towards our *persons*, our *families*, our *Church*, will much make us to understand the *loving-kindness of the Lord*. The love of our friend to us is not seen so much in some acts of his goodness, which others experience as much as we, as in some *special things*, which he doth for us, and doth not, or will not do for others. The observation therefore of *special Providence* helps much to affect our hearts with the love of God. God in trying our love to him saith to us, *What do you do more than others?* and as our love to God is so tried, so Gods love to us is so *evidenced*: this is that which hath always set the hearts of the people of God admiring God. This was that which set the *Psalmist* upon admiring Gods goodness to mankind, *Psal.* 8. 4, *What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that thou shouldest remember him?* If you read on, you will see, that which affected the *Psalmist*, was Gods *special Providences* to man, making him little lower than the Angels, cloathing him with glory

glory and honour, putting all things under his feet, &c. This made *David* understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, 1 *Sam.* 7. 18, *Who am I, O Lord, and what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto? and this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord.* God aggravates our sins from the special Providences he hath blessed us with; as in the case of *David*, 2 Sam. 12. and *Saul*. *Moses* argueth the *Israelites* to *duty* from Gods special *Providences* to them, in the four first Chapters of *Deuteronomy*: nothing makes us so much as them to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. Oh therefore observe, consider what God hath done, and what he daily doth for you more than others; preserving your lives, your health, blessing you in your relations, and estates, and trades, prospering and succeeding you in your undertakings; above all, what he hath done for your souls more than for the souls of others, plucking you as brands out of the fire, snatching you (as the Angels did *Lot*) out of *Sodom*.

3. Lastly, This observation of *special Providence*, will more eminently engage and *quicken you to duty*. God expects it from you, as you may see by *Moses* his discourse to the *Israelites* in the four or five first Chapters of *Deuteronomy*; and you will find your hearts more enlarged in duty from the sense, and apprehension of them. But of this more under the next branch of Application.

Secondly, This Doctrine of *special Providence* calleth upon *all mankind* in general; that *part of them which make up the Church of God more especially*; and yet more particularly, those that *fear the Lord*, for more special *homage and duty to God*: those gradations, you know, I observed in special Providence. The *objects*, the general objects of it, I told you, were *Angels* and *Men*. I baulked the discourse of Gods *special Providence* in the preservation and Government of the good *Angels*; as that the particulars of which we know little of: so neither are they those to whom we are to preach, neither do those blessed Spirits need any of our exhortations: they *spontaneously*, *perpetually*, and *without ceasing* give honour and glory to God, and do his will; and this in a degree proportioned to that *special Providence*, by which they are both preserved and governed. We are bid to pray, that we might be able *on earth* to do the will of God, *as it is done in heaven*: it is to men, to the sons and daughters of men, that I am to speak. *Use* 3.

1. *Let all the sons and daughters of men then praise God, and*

and glorifie him in a degree proportioned to that ſpecial Providence which God exerciſeth toward them in general. You will ſay, what is that? I anſwer in the general, *It is more than that which God exerciſeth towards any degree of creatures that is beneath them.* There are three orders of creatures beneath man. 1. *Such as have only Being*, no *life*, as the *Earth*, the *Waters*, &c. 2. *Such as have Being* and *life*, but no ſenſe, as *herbs* and *plants*. 3. *Such as have Being*, and *life*, and *ſenſe*, but no *reaſon*, as *beaſts*, *birds*, *fiſhes*, *creeping things*; of all theſe God taketh a care, as I have before ſhewed you: but *doth God take care for Oxen?* (ſaith the Apoſtle in my Text), God exerciſeth a more particular ſpecial Providence for all the children of men than for any of theſe. Then certainly every man is obliged to *honour and glorifie God* more than theſe do. There is none of theſe but *glorifieth God* in its kind: The *Heavens declare his glory*; The little Bee and Silk-worm glorifieth God as they are his workmanſhip, and indued with excellent qualities which ſpeak the infinite wiſdom of God: every ſpire of graſs glorifies God as it ſheweth it ſelf to the world, and challengeth all the art of men to make ſuch a thing. Nay, theſe inanimate and brute creatures uſe all the faculties and qualities with which they were created, to the end for which God indued them with them. Alas! the beſt of men come much ſhort, none liveth and ſinneth not. None lives who uſeth not ſome of the faculties which God hath given him for his honour and glory, to his diſſervice and diſhonour. Wherein then can man live up to the ſpecial Providence, that watcheth over, preſerveth, and governeth him? I anſwer, *In the voluntary directions of his words, thoughts, and actions to the glory of God.* This no creature but man can do; they have no reaſonable ſouls, they act meerly *ex neceſſitate naturæ*, according to the neceſſity of nature impoſed upon them by the Law of creation: God indeed hath an honour from every man, as he is created in the image of God, and is a noble and glorious creature. One man may more ſpeak the praiſes of God than another, as he is indued with a greater wit or wiſdom, hath more dexterity, ſagacity, more excellent parts than another; but while the poor creatures heart is not right-ſet, and bent, and directed to the glory of God; wherein doth he more than an Element, or a brute Beaſt? that man only in this excelleth a Stone, or a brute Beaſt, that with purpoſe of heart, out of choice, and deſignedly honoureth God: and *quotus quiſque eſt*, how rare is the man in the

the world that ſets his heart to bring God glory by his manlike actions. God hath indeed an accidental glory by moſt mens actions; but it is rather to be ſaid, that God is glorified by them, than that they glorifie God: Now what a ſad reflection this is for a wicked man to think, that *his horſe* more glorifies God than he doth. There's no man liveth, but partaketh more of a ſpecial Providence than any other creature, not of his order: certainly God expects from all of you, ſome ſervice proportionable to this particular Providence. Say to your ſelves ſometimes, What do I more for God than the flower of my Garden? the graſs in my field, the beaſt in my ſtall? and ſee if the anſwer of your ſouls, to ſuch a Queſtion, will not reflect a ſhame upon you. O ſtudy your ſpecial Providences, and live up to them: remember, that where God hath given much he expects much. But reſt not here, do not only ſtudy the *ſpecial Providences* which you are under, as men, and which are common to all men with your ſelves, or to the moſt of men with your ſelves; but obſerve, and ſtudy alſo the *particular Providences that have followed you*, for which God expecteth a return. It may be you have more wit, more wiſdom than others, you have a greater dexterity in buſineſs: God hath better provided for you, given you a better eſtate, more comforts in your relations, &c. Oh live up to theſe Specialties of Providence: you will expect it from thoſe to whom you have at any time done any good: you are miſtaken if you think that God doth not expect it from you.

2. This more eſpecially calleth to you, *who are the members of the viſible Church*, for *a more ſpecial conſecration and dedication of your ſelves unto God.* You have heard that the Church is an eminent object of ſpecial Providence many ways; many ſpecial Promiſes are made to it, and that is the body of people of the world whom God careth for: ſee then what a particular obligation lieth upon all profeſſors, all members of the viſible Church, to give God honour and glory. You are the only people in the world, *to whom the Oracles of God are committed*; *you are the pillar of truth*; you are thoſe who do alone enjoy the Ordinances of God: you are the people in the midſt of whom God dwelleth, upon whom the eye of God is from one end of the year to the other. Certainly there lies an high obligation upon you to honour God more than others. God

hath done infinitely more for you than for Heathens. Now what a ſhame it is that an Heathen ſhould out-doe you in any thing; yet give me leave to tell you, that while you only do ſome actions that are materially good, not formally and truly, many Heathens have done as much as you. An Heathen may do, and many of them have done, and that with ſome good intention, actions materially good, that is, ſuch things as God commanded. Many of them have been eminent inſtances of moral vertue, Juſtice, charity, temperance, liberality, &c. many of them have profeſſed to love vertue for the ſake of vertue. Wherein can you excel them? but by doing actions which are *formally good*, deſigning Gods glory, acting in obedience to Gods will, regulating your ſelves as to the manner by Gods word: you have the word, the Goſpel of God, oh how reaſonable it is that our *converſation ſhould be as becomes the Goſpel of Chriſt!* The Heathen elſe that lives up to his light of nature out-does us, and *it will* (as our Saviour tells us) *be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of Judgment than for us.*

3. But Laſtly, *Let the Saints of God ſee what an obligation, to all manner of duty and holineſs, lies upon their ſouls:* they are the moſt ſpecial objects of *ſpecial Providence.* God takes more care for all men, than for Oxen, or for the graſs of the field; he exerciſeth a more ſpecial Providence for that body of people which make up his viſible Church, than for all the earth beſides: but yet what is that ſpecial Providence which God exerciſeth for meer formal profeſſors, or for any other men in the world, in compariſon of what they have experienced! Any thing of more ſpecial diſtinguiſhing Grace, is a great Specialty of Providence, and that in the beſt and higheſt ſort of good things, *viz.* thoſe which concern the ſalvation of the Soul. Oh, what doth God expect? what doth God require from you? what ſhould you do more than others? More particularly, This Doctrine of ſpecial Providence calls to you,

1. *For more extraordinary degrees of Love.* 2. *For more ſpecial acts of Faith.* 1. *For more eminent degrees of Love,* Pſal. 31. 23, *O Love you the Lord, all you his Saints, for the Lord preſerveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. Reaſon argueth thus with us,* that the reciprocations of our love ought to bear proportion to love received. *If* (ſaith

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our Saviour) *you love them that love you, what reward have you?* the law of nature commandeth us to love, and by actions of kindneſs and duty to expreſs our love to them who have expreſſed their kindneſs to us: and the ſame reaſon requires the reciprocations of love to be proportionable. God therefore declaring eſpecial love to you, you are bounden in a ſpecial duty to him. Let our Saviours queſtion be often in your thoughts, *What do you do more than others?* If you for whom God hath ſent his Son to dye, and into whoſe hearts he hath ſent his Spirit, the Spirit of *Adoption*, *Supplication*, *Conſolation*, and whom the Lord hath from the womb watched over and preſerved by a more ſpecial peculiar Providence, bearing you as upon *Eagles* Wings, and gathering you as an Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings; I ſay, If you do no more for God than others do, not under ſuch influences, nor ſuch Providences; you muſt certainly act beneath, and ſhort of your duty. This dependeth upon what I told you before, of the reaſonableneſs of the reciprocations of love in ſome commenſurate proportions.

2. It calleth to them *who fear God*, for ſpecial *exerciſes of faith*; you have reaſon more to *truſt* and *depend* upon God than others, becauſe God hath declared a more ſpecial care and Providence for you. The ground of all faith is the word and promiſe of God. Now ſpecial promiſes call for a more ſpecial and peculiar faith. What though another man cannot truſt God contrary to a ſenſible or reaſonable appearance; yet you have reaſon to do it, becauſe God hath declared more his care for you, and the workings of his Providence for your preſervation and deliverance than for others: God hath promiſed to ſave, defend and deliver you, not after the workings of his ordinary Providence. You may therefore ſay with *David*, *The Lord is my light and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear?* He is the ſtrength of my life, of *whom ſhall I be afraid?* Pſalm 27. 1. 3, *Though an Hoſt ſhould encamp againſt me, my heart ſhould not fear: though war ſhould riſe againſt me, in this I will be confident.* But thus much ſhall ſerve to have diſcourſed concerning the Specialties of *Divine Providence.*

SERMONS, XII, XIII.

Rom XI. 33.

O the depth both of the wiſdom and knowledg of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!

I Have finiſhed my Diſcourſe concerning the principal Acts of Divine Providence, both *generally* and *ſpecially*. I have diſcourſed concerning Gods general Acts in *preſerving and governing* all his creatures, and concerning God's more ſpecial *preſerving and governing* of ſome creatures. I am now come to diſcourſe concerning the *Methods* of it, concerning which we muſt cry out with this great Apoſtle; *O the depth both of the wiſdom and knowledg of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out?* My Text is the concluſion of an exceeding deep diſcourſe, which the Apoſtle had made concerning the *Rejection of the Jews:* which he proves to be neither *Total*, nor *final*. In the ten firſt verſes he proveth that it is not *Total*. V. 2, *God did not caſt off his people, whom he did foreknow*. V. 5, *There is a remnant according to Election*. As it was in *Elias*'s time: he thought, and complain'd *that he was left alone, and they ſought his life alſo:* but he was miſtaken, God at that time had *ſeven thouſand in Iſrael, that had not bowed the knee to Baal*. V. 7, He ſaith, *The Election had obtained*, though ſome, though the moſt of them were rejected: yet the Elect amongſt them were not rejected; and this he proveth to have been but according to what was propheſied. V. 11, He proveth that this Rejection ſhould not be *final*: There ſhould be a *fulneſs of them*, V. 12. *Receiving*

ing of them, V. 15. They ſhould be again *grafted in*, V. 23,24. It is but (V. 25.) till the *fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhould come*, and then *all Iſrael ſhould be ſaved*. This Diſcourſe is mixed with ſeveral arguments to prove the aſſertion, and with ſeveral reflections upon the *Gentiles*, whoſe preſent ſtate was better than theirs: ſhewing them their duty *negatively* and *poſitively*: *not to be high-minded, but humble*; *To fear*, &c. Now look as a man wading in deep waters, when he finds the water go over his head, and trip up his heels; he cries out, *O I ſhall be drowned*, and endeavours to get back again. So doth the bleſſed Apoſtle; he had been wading into the great deeps of Gods counſels and ways: but he findeth that *ſuch knowledg* (as *David* ſaith) *was too wonderful for him*. In my Text, he doth *referre pedem*, draw his foot backward. I will go back, ſaith he, I will wade no further: *O the depth! There are ſome truths, and ways of God which are unſearchable*. We may diſcourſe a little, and more generally of them: but we ſhall never be able to find the bottom of them. It is wiſdom for us in time to retreat, and cry, *O the depth!* But what depth is this? The bleſſed Apoſtle tells you of *the wiſdom and knowledg of God*; in man *knowledg and wiſdom*, are two differing habits; a man may be a *knowing man*, yet not a *wiſe* man. Knowledg apprehends things, Wiſdom directs the practice to the beſt ends of humane life. Knowledg is a *ſpeculative habit*, *Wiſdom*, *a practical habit*. In God alſo (though he be but one *ſimple act*), we may conceive a difference betwixt *Wiſdom*, and *Knowledg*; but in this Text, poſſibly it is but ἓν διὰ δυοῖν, one thing expreſſed by two terms: he is ſpeaking of the *wiſdom*, the unſearchable wiſdom of God in ſome particular acts of his Providence; *How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his ways paſt finding out*. Here are two terms, *Judgments, and Ways*: Both again here ſignifie, 1. the ſame thing. *Judgments* in Scripture, ſometimes ſignifie the ways *and ſtatutes of God*; becauſe of the *Juſtice and righteouſneſs* that is in them. By *Juſtice*, God meaſureth his own Words, and Laws. 2. Sometimes the Term ſignifieth *corrections* and *chaſtiſements*; becauſe God meaſureth out all theſe likewiſe in Juſtice, and in them acteth as a righteous Judg: But here doubtleſs, *Judgments and ways* ſignifie the ſame thing. All Gods ways are Judgments, ways of Juſtice and Equity, and Righteouſneſs. The term *ways*, is alſo uſed in more ſenſes than one: Sometimes it ſignifies the *way of Duty*, wherein we ought to walk towards God, or the courſe

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of mens actions; so you read of the *way of the wicked*, *the way of sinners*: here it is applied to God, and signifies, The course and series of his actions towards his creatures; so it signifies here. Of these *Judgments, and ways* of God, of this *wisdom and knowledg of God*, it is said, They *are unsearchable*, they *are past finding out*. *Unsearchable*, that is, such as we can by no means search out, by no means come to the bottom of. The only Proposition I shall insist upon from these words, is this:

Prop. *The ways of Gods counsels and Providence, are unsearchable and not to be found out.*

In the handling of this Proposition,

1. I *will endeavour to prove it to you that it is so.*

2. I *will shew you how far it is our duty to behold, and to search into them: and to shew you also wherein they are unsearchable, and not to be found out.* Then I shall make some application. Let us first see how this is established from Scripture: *Eccles.* 8. 17, *Then I beheld all the works of God, that a man cannot find out his work that is done under the Sun: yea, though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it: yea, though a wiseman thinketh to know it, yet he shall not find it.* A Text which must be understood of Gods *works of Providence*. The Wiseman saith, *a man cannot find them out*, yea though a man labour to seek it, yet he shall not find it: He that spake this was *Solomon*, a man to whom God had given Wisdom above all that had been before him, and said that there should be none after him, who should be like unto him. He tells us *ver.* 16, That as he was indued with Wisdom, enriched with this Talent, so he had not laid it up in a Napkin, but had made it his business to improve it: *I have* (saith he) *applied my heart to wisdom, and to see the business which is done on the earth.* V. 17, you have the conclusion, *That the ways of God were not to be found out; yea though a wise man think to know it, yet he shall not find it out.* Psalm 36. 6, *His righteousness is like a great mountain, his judgments are a great deep:* Not a deep only, but a *great deep*. The Sea is called *a great deep*; there is no sounding the bottom of it in many places: *For* (saith the Apostle) *what man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man that is within him: even so no man knoweth the things of God, but the spirit of God*; and it must be so if we consider the

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infiniteneſs of the Divine Light, Wiſdom and Underſtanding; *His underſtanding is infinite*, Pſalm 147. 5. Now it is ſaid of the works of God, *In wiſdom hath he made them all:* There is the infinite wiſdom of God in the works and contrivances of his Providence. The Apoſtle telleth us, *he dwelleth in that light to which none can approach*, 1 Tim. 6. 16: and ſo he walks in that light which none can ſee, and fully comprehend: *There is no ſearching out of his underſtanding*, Iſa. 40. 28. The way of the Lord is like the way of an *Eagle in the air*; of a *Serpent upon a Rock*, not to be ſeen, not to be tracked, *Incomprehenſibilis Dei ſapientia inter anguſtias humanæ rationis coarctari non poteſt.* It is the ſaying of a grave Author, Gods unſearchable incomprehenſible wiſdom cannot be cooped up within the ſtraits of humane Reaſon: but the Doctrine is experimentally, and *de facto*, evident enough.

In the ſecond place, here may ariſe a Queſtion; How far our duty extendeth, as to the ways of Divine Providence? for certainly we have a duty, a great duty incumbent upon us to Divine Providences. I remember it is the ſaying of *Cicero*, *Si vera eſt ſententia quorundam philoſophorum qui omnino nullam rerum humanarum procurationem docent habere Deos; Quæ poteſt eſſe pietas? Quæ Religio? Quæ ſanctitas?* Cicero de Nat. Deorum: *If the opinion of ſome Philoſophers, who deny that the Gods exerciſe any providence (or take any care of humane affairs) be true; What piety can there be? What Religion? What Holineſs.* A ſentence which will let us know that there were ſome amongſt the Heathens that were leſs Atheiſts, than ſome amongſt thoſe who are called *Chriſtians.* Now the caſe is the ſame, ſuppoſing this Divine Procuration or Providence, if we may not, or do not at all take notice of it. Let me therefore diſcourſe a little concerning the duty of man with reference to the Providence of God; and then I ſhall ſhew you the boundaries of it, and wherein it is unſearchable. I ſhall open the firſt in three or four particulars:

1. It is doubtleſs the duty of *Gods people, To ſee and behold the works of the Lord:* indeed we cannot but ſee them, they are before our eyes every day. But my meaning is, to *behold the things that are done in the earth, as the works of the Lord.* There are too many that do ſee, and not ſee; they ſee pluckings up, and plantings of Nations and Families, but they ſee nothing of God in theſe effects. They ſay not *this is the Lords doing*, and therefore it is not *marvellous in their eyes:* They ſee *Peſtilences*, ſweeping

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ing away Cities and Families; *fires* laying populous Cities waſte: Enemies breaking in upon Countries, and ſtrangely over-running them, the hand of God ſweeping away whole Families, but they ſee nothing of God in them: they conſider theſe as terrible things, as misfortunes, to which the ſtate of Humane affairs is ſubjected; their Eyes are upon the viſible wheels that turn theſe things, but they ſee not the *wheel* within the *wheel:* the *Pſalmiſt* calleth to us, to *come and behold the works of the Lord, what deſolations he hath wrought in the earth.* Men ſee deſolations wrought in the Earth, but they ſee them not as the work of the Lord, as deſolations wrought by him. This is what the *Pſalmiſt* complained of, and for which he prayeth againſt them, *Pſalm* 28.4,5, *Give them according to the works of their hands,* &c. *Becauſe they regard not the work of the Lord, nor regard the operations of his hands: he ſhall deſtroy them, and not build them up.* This is a ſign of an Atheiſtical heart, to ſee great changes, and not to ſee God in them: the *Heathens* had more of Religion than this came to. I remember the *Poet* in his deſcription of the ruine of *Troy,* bringeth in *Venus* taking *Æneas* off his mettal in the laſt defence of his Country, and from taking Revenge on *Helena* the cauſe of it, by ſhewing him the gods at every corner and poſt of the City, helping the *Grecians* to fire it, and to over-turn the walls of it. It is very ſad that amongſt Chriſtians, there ſhould be any that in the great changes which God worketh in *Nations, Cities, Families,* cannot ſee the great and living God at work, and uſing creatures but as inſtruments in his hand: but this is but a ſeeing and beholding the *works of Providence,* highly uſeful for the production of pious affections, and ſuch acts of duty as God requireth; We have a further Duty than this incumbent upon us.

2. It is not only our Duty to *ſee and behold*; but wiſtly to *conſider* and *obſerve* theſe things. *Pſalm* 107. 43, *Whoſo is wiſe will obſerve theſe things, and he ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord,* (a Text which in this diſcourſe I ſhall make a further uſe of.) Obſervation implieth *the application of our minds, unto the paſſages of Divine Providence* which are *before our eyes:* as we muſt not be careleſs and *forgetful hearers of the word of God,* ſo we muſt not be careleſs and forgetful obſervers of the works of God. It is ſaid *Gen.* 37. 11, that *Jacob obſerved the ſaying, Joſephs ſaying* in the repetition of his Dream, relating to eminent providen-

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tial workings. So it is said, *Luke* 2. 19, That when upon the birth of our Saviour, the *Angels* had spoke to the Shepherds, and the Shepherds had published the glad tidings which they had brought to the City, *That all who heard it wondred at those things which were spoken by the Shepherds: Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart.* To see a thing, is one thing, to make our minds to stand upon it, to *consider it*, and to ponder upon it, is another thing. This is also our Duty, as to meditate on the Lords words, so to *meditate on the Lords works:* twice the *Psalmist* hath it, *I will meditate on all thy works*, Psalm 143. 5, *I muse on the works of thy hands.* So *Psalm* 77. *v.* 12, *I will meditate also on all thy works, and talk of thy doings.* It is our great fault, that we suffer the impression of Gods works to go off our hearts too soon. We hear of great changes; we see great desolations, God works in *Kingdoms*, *Cities*, and Families: at first they make a little impression upon us, we startle at them; but by the next day they are as a tale that is told, the sound is out of our ears, the impression is off our minds: this is now, not to *observe the works of the Lord*, not, as we ought, to *consider the operation of his hands.*

3. It is thirdly our Duty, *modestly and humbly to search out the causes of Providences towards our selves especially.* We are commanded to *hear the Rod, and who hath appointed it.* Thus did *Josephs* brethren, *Gen.* 42. 21: when they were in prison they said one to another, *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, when we saw the anguish of his soul; when he sought to us, and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us.* *Job* prays, *Job* 10. 2, *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me:* this is but a *searching*, and *trying our ways*, an excellent help, and necessary *medium* in order to a true repentance. Indeed it is our great errour, that we are very prone to search out the causes of severe Providences upon others. The *Barbarians* seeing a Viper cleave to *Pauls* hand, conclude him a Murtherer; but we are very slow and backward, to enquire into the meritorious causes of Gods severe Dispensations to our selves: Yet as to others, as it is our Duty to observe the Providences of God to them, so we may modestly and humbly search out the causes of them. Thus did *Jeremiah, venia præfata*, having first recognized God, in the Justice and righteousness of his proceedings: *Jer.* 12. 1, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, in thy Judgments, when I plead with thee*; yet *let me talk with thee of thy Judgments: why doth the way of the wicked*

proſper, &c? So the Prophet *Habbakuk*, ch. 1. 13, *Wherefore lookeſt thou upon them that deal treacherouſly, and holdeſt thy tongue, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?* But as to this ſearching into the cauſes of Divine Providences, I put in thoſe two words, *modeſtly*, and *humbly*. Indeed, God is ſo plain and open in his Judgments ſometimes, that the *provocation* is wrote, and that in capital Letters in the front of the puniſhment. Thus it was in the caſe of the *Sodomites*, the *Egyptians*, the *Benjamites*; *Sauls bloody houſe*, *Haman*, the final deſtruction of the *Jews*, &c: and thus it is ſtill very often. The *Drunkard* dies in his drunkenneſs; but it is not always ſo. The Judgments *of the Lord are a great deep*. This enquiry therefore into cauſes muſt be modeſt and humble: we muſt no more *cacutire in revelatis*, as to the works of God, than as to the word of God: if we ſee a *blood-thirſty* and *deceitful man*, not living out half his days, a Dart ſtriking through the liver of the Adulterer; theſe are open things. And when we ſee prophane vile wretches, *devouring thoſe that are more righteous than they*: when we ſee God plaguing men according to his own heart, chaſtening them every moment, not giving them time to ſwallow their ſpittle: Theſe are ſecrets of Divine Providence, of which we muſt be careful that we paſs no ungrounded cenſure, yea, and we muſt ſearch *humbly* too. Our judgment in theſe caſes will amount to no more, than a judgment of probability: we cannot pretend to an infallibility, we are not of Gods counſel, and his ways are great deeps.

4. Laſtly, *We ought ſo far to ſearch into, and to enquire into the workings of Divine Providence, as may any way conduce to make us better, by more adoring and revereing God; more avoiding of ſin, more quickning up the habits and exerciſes of grace: but to take heed of ſuch an enquiry as will be of no uſe to us, unleſs to make us Atheiſts, or too curious ſearchers into the unſearchable things of God, or uncharitable cenſurers of our brethren.* The reaſon of this is, becauſe *Duty* is the End of all our beholding, conſidering and obſerving the Lords works, or any way enquiring and ſearching into them. This is the main thing which God hath ſaid to us, *Obey my voice*. Now ſo far as an enquiring into the Lords ways and works of Providence, will help us to *obey the Lords voice*, ſo far doubtleſs it is our Duty. The voice of the Lord is in Scripture everywhere to us; to *fear before him*, to *love him*, to *truſt in him*, to take heed of ſinning againſt him. Now ſo far as

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the searching into the causes of *Divine Providence*, may conduce to quicken us up to these Exercises, so far is it undoubtedly our duty, and a very commendable practice; but where it only tendeth to make us *Atheists*, by seeing nothing of the hand of God in them, but confirming a fancy in us, that we have found out the reason of all in a necessary connexion, or working of natural causes, or only serveth us for an advantage or ground for us unwarrantably and uncharitably to judg and censure our brethren, so far it is undoubtedly sinful. Where the searching of the causes of Divine Providence to us, or others may contribute; and so far forth, as it may conduce to quicken us up to repentance for them, to a faith in, and a dependence upon God, to make us either more thankful, or any way more holy; so far forth it is our advantagious duty. Thus *Jona*'s reflection upon the storm he met with at Sea, when he was fleeing from God, *Jonah* 1. 10, 11: and *Josephs* brethrens reflection upon the imprisonment they met with in *Egypt*, were both good and pious, tending to bring them to a sense of their several sins against God. *Davids* observation of Providence helped him in the exercise of his Faith; 1 *Sam.* 17. 34, 35. *Manoahs* wifes observation, that *God had accepted a sacrifice*, confirm'd his faith, that he would not destroy them. Oft-times the observing of, and searching into the ways of Divine Providence, hugely exciteth praise and thankfulness, *Psalm* 107. 8. 15, 21, 31, &c. Thus far now it is our duty, to behold, observe, search into the ways of Divine Providence; they are not called *unsearchable*, to deter us from beholding, seeing and considering them, so far as it may help in the performance of any piece of that duty which we owe unto God. God hangs out his great works of Providence to the world that men may behold them, look upon them, and that not superficially, but wistly and considerately. Well, but *how are they then unsearchable?* why doth the Apostle pronounce them *past finding out?* That brings me to the last thing promised you in the Explication of the Proposition: I shall open it to you in several particulars.

1. *They are unsearchable and past finding out, as to the latitude and full compass of them.* Job, ch. 26, had been largely discoursing of the great works of *Divine Providence, his stretching out the North upon the empty places, and hanging the Earth upon nothing.* Ver. 7, His *binding up the waters in the thick clouds, and the clouds not being rent under them*, ver. 8, &c. But then concludeth *ver.* 14, *Lo these are part of his ways, but how little a portion is*

heard of him? but the thunder of his power, who can understand? some read it, These are but *the borders*, some *corners of Gods ways*. *David* telleth us, *Psalm* 111. 2, *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.* It is our duty to seek out the works of the Lord, and every good man hath a pleasure therein, and will be modestly seeking out Gods works; ay, but though they will be seeking, yet we shall be no more in this World than *seekers*: Job 16.7, *Who can find out the Almighty to perfection*, saith God? Much of God is seen, much of God may be found out; but the perfection of Gods works, as well as of his Divine Being, is an unsearchable thing. There are thousands of things in the workings of Divine Providence which we cannot find out: infinite motions in the *upholdings of it*, in the *government of it*, of which we know nothing; something we can by the helps of Scripture and Reason, discourse, how Providence upholds the great varieties of Beings in the World, the Methods of God in governing the World; but *who can find out the Almighty to perfection?* Who can discourse *the thunder of his power*? There is a *terra incognita*, or rather a *cœlum incognitum* in the Divine workings. What *Job* said, we may apply here; *A thing was brought unto me, and my ear received a little thereof.* Many things concerning Gods workings are brought to our senses, and our senses receive, yea our reason receiveth a little, and but a little thereof: as to them we may say as the Apostle saith in another case, *Where is the Scribe? where is the Wise man? where is the disputer of this World?* We by study can dive a little into Gods ways; but we must come out of our deepest studies, crying out with our Apostle, *O the depth of the wisdom and knowledg of God!* This knowledg is, as *Job* saith, Job. 11.7,8, *As high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.*

2. A second thing *unsearchable, and past finding out in these ways of God, is the tendency of them, while we see them come to an issue.* Had one of us been a companion with *Joseph*, and seen him *thrown* into a pit, then sold into *Egypt*; after this thrown into a prison, upon the accusation of his Mistriss, we could never have judged this a Method in order to his riding in the second Chariot, and being the second man in *Egypt*; but we see at last it was so. Had we been in the *Court of Persia*, or *Babylon*, and have seen *Haman*'s Exaltation and his power with the King, obtaining

taining a Decree from him for the destruction of all the *Jews*, we should never have seen the tendency of this to the ruin of *Haman*, the *exaltation* of *Mordecai*, &c. Had we seen *Daniel* thrown into the *Lion's* Den, we could never have read the tendency of this to his greater exaltation and fuller preferment, and conquest over his Enemies; and yet so it was. The tendencies of Divine Providence are sometimes by us boldly determined; sometimes guessed at: but how unsearchable are the ways of God in them? How strangely are we every day mistaken in what we judged the design, and tendency of many motions of Providence, proving in the issue quite contrary to what we expected.

3. A *third* unsearchable thing in *Divine Providence*, is *the track of it*. Necessary causes (and such Natural causes are) have a certain track, you may follow the prints of their feet: *Moral and voluntary causes* have not such a *certain track*, moving not like Machines, but as influenced from the *will of man*; but yet there is something of ordinary certainty in them. Reason in all men, and in men of several ages is much a-kin; whence that certainty doth arise, as well as from the finiteness of mens wisdom and understanding. But here God is *unsearchable*: he doth not always do the same things, the same ways; sometimes by humane means, sometimes without means, sometimes by improbable means: sometimes adding by a preternatural power to natural causes: sometimes by suspending their acts; sometimes by over-ruling their motions and workings, all in infinite variety: so as his ways are like the ways of a *Ship* in the sea, an *Eagle* in the air, a *Serpent* upon a Rock; you can track them in none of their ways. By Faith we know that God will deliver his people; but how, and by what means, or when, we know not. Sometimes *prosperity shall slay the fool*, sometimes he shall perish by adversity; sometimes the Sinner shall be cut off in the middle of his days, sometimes he shall live to an extream old age: men keep a path and a track in their motions, but God keepeth none. *Naaman* did ill, when he came to the God of *Israel* to be healed of his Leprosie, to be prescribing to him so much as in his thoughts, thinking *that the Prophet* must needs come down, and stroke the sore, &c. Gods way or method of Providence, in bringing about the effects of his counsels and purposes, is unsearchable.

4. A fourth thing which in the motions of Divine Providence is unsearchable, is the *indications of it*. *Solomon* telleth us, that

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the righteous and *the wise, and their works are in the hand of the Lord*, Eccles. 9. 1, 2. Unto all men there is one event, both to the righteous and to the wicked: No man can know either love or hatred, by all that is before him in this life. *Esau* is rejected, yet he hath the mountains of *Edom* given him for his portion, and the seed of *Jacob* must not dispossess him. *Jacob* is beloved, yet must he fly to *Padan Aram*, endure the extremities of weather to feed his Uncles flocks, &c. and when he cometh away, he must once and again run the hazard of his life. No man can expound the Providences of God unto any to make them indications of *Gods love or hatred*. *Israel* is the people beloved of the Lord, yet they must serve an hard servitude in *Egypt*; then forty years together, by travelling through a desolate and howling Wilderness. *Dives* is rich, cloathed with purple, and fareth deliciously every day; yet when he dyeth goeth to Hell. *Lazarus* is a poor beggar at his gates, cloathed with rags, abounding with sores, yet when he dies is by Angels carried to *Abraham*'s bosom. *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and *David*, and *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, all rich men, yet very good, and heirs of the Kingdom of God: Others very poor, yet every-whit as poor spiritually, and miserable as to their spiritual estate, as they are in respect to their outward condition. Grateful Providences speak the appearing love of God to us, and oblige us to thankfulness, but they do not speak special distinguishing love. Adverse Providences appear as the frowns of God upon us, yet may be but the chastenings of an indulgent father, who chasteneth whom he loveth, and scourgeth every child whom he receiveth. Hell begins with some in this life; their life is but a life of misery, and leadeth into that misery which shall never have an end: sometimes men in the enjoyments of this life are lifted up to Heaven, but it is —— *ut lapsu graviore ruant*, that their fall may be the greater into the pit prepared for them. The Indications of Divine Providence are altogether unsearchable. No man can know love or hatred by any thing which is before him in this life.

5. A fifth unsearchable thing in *Divine Providence*, is the *causes of them*. There is infinite wisdom and reason in all the dispensations of Providence. In wisdom hath the Lord done, and made whatsoever he hath done: but this wisdom of God, as to all his works of Providence, is not always evident to

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us. It is one of those things, which Divines say, we shall more perfectly understand at the day of Judgment, and in another life, than we yet do, how wisely the infinite wise God hath managed the Government of the World. We are oft-times startled, and troubled, and amazed to see the works of God in the World, and at loss to compound them with the declarations of his love to his people, and the great number of promises made to them. What Christ said to *Peter*, We may apply here, what God is doing we do not know here, but *we shall know hereafter*. We cannot tell the reason of a thousand dispensations of God to his Church and people here, but we shall know them hereafter. Sometimes we know much of them in this life, but what we do not know in this life we shall know in the day, when *all hidden things shall be made manifest*, and all the works as well as all the Saints of God shall praise him.

6. Lastly, The *windings* of *Providence are unsearchable*. It is with the Providence of God, as it is with a man of business that is riding to *London*; that is his utmost journey, but he doth not like a Post keep his road, but rides out this way and that way, to speak with this and that man, as his business leadeth him. The Providence of God drives at the securing of his Church, the destruction of his Enemies, the promoving of Gods glory, &c. But it carrieth on many designs together, possibly the chastising of his people for their sins, the suffering of the *Amorites* to make up their measure: so it winds in its motions, and the reason of the variety of its windings and turnings we do not understand. But this is much co-incident with what I told you before concerning the tracks of Divine Providence, that they are past finding out. I come therefore now to the Application. I shall there only shew you the usefulness of this point. 1. *To check curiosity*. 2. *To direct you in spiritual duty*.

In the first place, Let this check that *curiosity which so much infecteth humane nature, and to which the wiser part of men are mostly too subject*. It was the complaint, long since, of an acute Author, *Iste labor vexat homines ut plus Deum laborent intelligere, quam diligere —— malumus vestigando laborare quam amando reperire, malumus inquirere, quam invenire & perfrui.* —— "This "is a labour which vexeth men; they take more pains to understand, than to love God. We had rather tire our selves by search- *Use* 1.

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ing than by loving find God. We had rather enquire than find and enjoy. *Curioſity* is a great piece of the vanity of the mind of man: it was *Eves* temptation to eat of the true knowledg *of good and evil*, that ſhe might be like God knowing it. It is a *luſt inclining a man to employ his outward ſenſes and his underſtanding, to an inordinate gaining of ſome knowledg which God hath hidden from him.* Knowledg is good; it is the light of the ſoul. *Solomon* tells us, *That it is not good that the ſoul ſhould be without it.* But there is a knowledg that is *too wonderful for us.* Secret things belong unto God. Our Saviour told us, that there is a day and hour of which none can have any knowledg, no not the Angels. *It is not for you,* (ſaith our Saviour) *to know the times and ſeaſons, which the father hath put in his own power,* Acts 1. 7. The knowledg of truth is good, but it may be accidentally evil.

1. If the *End be naught:* If a man deſires to know only that he may be able to *cavil* and *diſpute*, or, that he may be thought wiſer than others. *Solomon* ſaith, *It is not good for a man to eat much honey: ſo for a man to ſeek his own glory, is not glory.*

2. *If we will uſe unlawful means to gain it*; ſuch are now going to *witches* and *wizards*, *Aſtrologers*, *Star-gazers*, cunning men, as *Ahaziah* ſent to *Baalzebub the god of Ekron*, to know whether he ſhould recover of that diſeaſe; and *Saul* went to the *witch of Endor* to raiſe up *Samuel*, the Devil in the likeneſs of *Samuel*, to tell him the fate of the approaching Battel. A practice too frequent amongſt ſimple people in theſe days, and places where we live.

3. *When men have an itch to know what God hath concealed from them.* It was an excellent advice of St. *Auguſtine*, That men ſhould neither be too curious to pry into ſecret things, nor be blind as to what God had revealed. To do the firſt, is to be unwarrantably curious; the latter is damnable unthankfulneſs. *Vain man would be wiſe*, and ſo becometh indeed more fooliſh in his imaginations. *Plutarch* well compareth men infected with this itch, to thoſe that ſhould not be content to behold the *Sun* in the firmament, but muſt make a Ladder to climb up to ſee it in its Throne; we ſhall find the beſt of men had ſomething of this diſeaſe. *Moſes* ſaith, *Lord, ſhew me thy Glory. Philip* ſaith, *Shew us the Father.* The Diſciples ſay, *Wilt thou not this time reſtore the Kingdom to Iſrael?* And again, *Lord, When ſhall theſe things be?* Now as this Curioſity in us ſheweth it ſelf in other things,

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ſo it wonderfully buſieth it ſelf as to the ways of Providence, to find out all the ways of God, and track him in his moſt ſecret paths; to underſtand the reaſons of Gods dealings, the *tendencies* and indications of them. *But oh! the depth of the wiſdom and knowledg of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!* Let me offer you two or three Meditations to give check to this luſt.

1. *It is an unprofitable labour.* It is a labour; *much ſtudy is a wearineſs to the fleſh:* and it is an unprofitable labour, by ſearching thou canſt not find out what thou ſearcheſt for: *Should a wiſe man utter vain knowledg* (ſaith *Eliphaz*), Job 15. 2? *Should a wiſe man ſeek after knowledg in vain, and fill his belly with the eaſt-wind?* The boy in *Plutarch* carrying a covered diſh, anſwered him well, that would know what was in it, by telling him, *It was therefore covered that he might not know what was in it.* God hath alſo his covered diſhes, man will be enquiring what is in them; but he ought to know that God hath therefore covered them, that he might not know, and therefore it is but a vain thing for him to enquire and ask. Should a Chriſtian, an underſtanding Chriſtian, buſie himſelf in ſearching out that which he cannot find out, when he hath wearied himſelf in a long and vain enquiry? as ſoon may you track an Eagle in the air, or a Ship on the Sea, as God in the ways and methods of his Providence: ſuch knowledg, when you have done what you can, will prove too wonderful for you. No wiſe man will labour in vain, and ſpend his time, and his wit, and parts to find out that, which he is aſſured he ſhall never find out by enquiry.

2. You ſhall obſerve *our bleſſed Lord continually checking ſuch enquirers:* one while putting them off, and directing them to more profitable employment for their thoughts; as when they asked him, *If there were few that ſhould be ſaved,* he bids them *ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate,* Luk 13. 21, 22. When they asked him, *Matth.* 24. 3. *When ſhall theſe things be?* He replyeth, *Take heed that no man deceive you:* ſometimes he chideth them, *Acts* 1. 4, 5. *It is not for you to know the times and ſeaſons.* When *Peter* asked, *John* 21. 21. *And what ſhall this man do?* Chriſt anſwereth, *If I will, that he tarry until I come, What is that to thee? Follow thou me.*

3. Laſtly, It commonly produceth *error in our imaginations, vain thoughts; bold determinations of the Councels of God, groundleſs prophecies, erroneous apprehenſions both of God, and of his ways.* What ſtrange effects have mens curious enquiries about the time for the *calling of the Jews*, the *ruin of Antichriſt*, the *day of Judgment* produced in the world? What have men at laſt found out about them, that a wiſe man can ſet his foot upon? Verily they have laboured for the wind, and filled their belly with the eaſt-wind, and run themſelves into a temptation to believe nothing of Scripture, becauſe their miſ-apprehenſions about thoſe dark portions of them, have failed them. There are ſome things, of which we may ſay, *Bona cœcitas eſt non videre, & quæ ſcire non licet piè ignorare*; "It is a good blind-"neſs not to ſee them, but to be piouſly ignorant of what we "cannot lawfully know. Let us labour to know God, and the *Will* of God ſo far as he hath revealed it. But for a knowledg of God in all his ways, for a perfect knowledg of him, it is too high, it is too wonderful for us: let us more ſtudy to love him, than to know him. By our underſtanding and comprehenſion of God, *we draw God to us.* By *Love* we *pour our ſelves into the boſom of God.* Knowledg and Wiſdom, let us have never ſuch degrees of it, if *love* to God be not as the ſoul to give it life, ſignifie nothing; and indeed Love is the end of all knowledg, and knowledg without Love is very unprofitable and inſignificant. *If* (ſaith the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 13.) *I knew all myſteries: yet if I have not love, I am but as a founding-braſs, and as a tinkling-cymbal.*

2. But in the ſecond place. This diſcourſe concerning the unſearchable things of Divine Providence, may ſerve *to direct us as to much ſpiritual duty.* I will ſhew you this in four or five particulars:

1. The firſt is that of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 12. 3. μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ' ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν, *to be wiſe to ſobriety.* We tranſlate it, *Not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think, but to think ſoberly.* It may as well be tranſlated, *Not to be wiſe above what we ought to be wiſe, but to be wiſe ſoberly.* The Apoſtle, *Col.* 2. 18. *makes an intruding into things which we have not ſeen,* but a ſign of *ones being puft up with a fleſhly mind. Auguſtine* ſaith, when a thing is obſcure, *Et aperte divina Scriptura non ſubvenit, temere aliquid definire humana conjectura præſumit,* Aug. "And the Scripture "doth

"doth not plainly help, humane Wisdom doth but presume, "rashly to define any thing about it. 'Tis an excellent thing for a Christian to know his measures, not to reach at further degrees of knowledg, about the secret things of God, than it hath pleased God in his Word to communicate unto us: that is the true boundary of spiritual knowledg. But I shall not inlarge upon this. This is now opposite to that *curiosity*, which I largely reflected upon under the first head of Application.

2. This in the second place calleth to us for a deep *adoration*, and *veneration* of *God*. This is one reason why the Lord hath made *his judgments so unsearchable, his ways past finding out.* An holy, and humble *admiration of God*, is one piece of that homage, which our souls owe to God: *He is to be admired of all them that believe*, 2 Thes. 1. 10. All admiration is the daughter of some ignorance, we seldom, or very little admire what we fully and perfectly understand. The unsearchableness of God in his ways, makes him the true and proper object of our admiration, and *admiration* giveth God the honour of his *unsearchableness*. Take heed of denying, or disputing what the Scriptures reveal of God, because you cannot comprehend and fathom it. Where you cannot comprehend him, there it is your duty to adore, and to admire him.

3. This Proposition calleth aloud to all, *To take heed of making the motions and issues of Providence, the rule and guide of their actions.* We are to follow the *rule of the word*, not the windings of *Providence*. I told you before, that *Providence* is like a man of business, that carrieth a great many designs in his head at once, and seldom keepeth his road: he that will bear such a man company to *London*, or any other place, which is the ultimate end of his journy, may go a great deal out of his way, and where he hath nothing to do, and be a great while longer than he need, before he cometh there; neither must the opportunities which Providence offereth be always taken, nor conclusions be made from the successes or frowns of it.

4. Learn hence *to take heed of raising either too sweet, or too bitter conclusions for, or against your selves, from the Providences of God.* The *indications, reasons, tendencies* of Provi-

vidence are all unſearchable things. Love or hatred cannot be concluded from what is before you in this life. *Providence* carrieth many to hell by a gale of proſperity; and others into heaven by a whirlwind of adverſity; the way to heaven is *by much tribulation*: ſome are ſcourged into heaven, others go leaping and dancing into the lake, which burns with fire and brimſtone.

5. Laſtly, Though it be our duty *to be wiſe unto ſobriety*, and not to ſearch curiouſly into what God hideth from us, though we cannot make either the motions or iſſues of Providence, the rule of our duty or action, becauſe in our appearance, it ſometimes pointeth one way, when the rule of the word directeth us another; yet it is our duty to *obſerve* the *motions* and paſſages of Divine Providence, to behold, obſerve, ponder them, and to lay them up in our hearts. Now what obſervation of Providence is our duty; or what obſervable things there are in the workings and motions of Divine Providence, muſt be the ſubject of a far larger diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

Pſal. CVII. 43.

Who ſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things, even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

WHoſo wiſtly caſteth his eyes upon this *Pſalm*, will find it from firſt to laſt a *Song of Providence*, intermixed with frequent exhortations or wiſhes, *That men would praiſe the Lord for his goodneſs, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.* My Text is the concluſion of this excellent Song, *Whoſo is wiſe, obſerveth theſe things.* The Prophet *Hoſea* hath much ſuch a concluſion of his Prophecy, *Hoſ.* 14. 6. *Who is wiſe, and he ſhall underſtand theſe things; prudent, and he ſhall know them?* The Propoſition of the Text is plainly this:

Prop. *It is an argument of ſpiritual wiſdom in men to obſerve the motions of Divine Providence: and thoſe that do it ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.* The Propoſition you ſee hath two Branches.

1. *That it is an argument of ſpiritual wiſdom, to obſerve the motions of Divine Providence.*

2. *That he who doth obſerve them, ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.*

The work commended to us, is the *obſervation of Providence.* The honour and reward of the work is expreſſed in two things: 1. It ſpeaketh a man *wiſe, truly, ſpiritually wiſe.* 2. *He ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.* The word which we tranſlate [obſerveth] is, וישמר, a word that ſignifies to *keep*, and to *obſerve*: it is often uſed in Scripture to ſignifie a keeping

ing ſafely, and tranſlated by the LXX by φυλάτλο. *He ſhall keep me in the way wherein I ſhall walk: and he that keepeth Iſrael, neither ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth*, Pſal. 121. 4. *And he ſhall give his angels charge over thee, and they ſhall keep thee*, Pſal. 91. 11. In all thoſe Texts the ſame word is uſed, ſometimes it is uſed to ſignifie ſuch a keeping of Gods Commandments, as ſheweth it ſelf in practice, as in *Deut.* 6. 17. and chap. 8. 2. ſometimes a keeping of them in our mind, as in that Text, *Gen.* 37. 10. *Jacob kept the ſaying*, the LXX interpret it διετήρησε. *Pagnine* ſaith of it, *Curam, ſollicitudinem & diligentiam denotat, ne quid emittatur, elabatur aut excutiatur.* "It denotes "care, ſollicitude and diligence, that nothing ſlip out, or be let "go, or ſhaken out. In ſhort, I conceive this duty of obſerving the works of the Lord, his great and various works of Providence, may be diſpatched in three things:

1. *In a conſiderate beholding and looking upon them:* Works of Providence, paſs before our eyes every day, but the truth is, for the moſt part, we ſee, and do not ſee them, that is, we do not conſiderately, and deliberately fix our eyes upon them, and ſee them as the Lords works; we ſee them as events in the world, but conſider not the operation of Gods hands in them. This is no obſerving of them. Obſerving them argues a fixing of the eye of the mind, as well as the body upon them, without which, a tranſient view of them, is of very little ſignificancy and import unto men.

2. In a diligent *repoſing them in our minds:* this is that which we call a *remembring of them.* The Lord doth his great work *to be had in remembrance.* This is a conſequent of the other, we remember little of thoſe things we only curſorily view as they come before us: but when we fix our eyes upon them, and apply our minds to the knowledg of them, then we remember them.

3. *In a continued and repeated view of them, and reflexion upon them.* That man that ſuffereth not the great and daily workings of Divine Providence to paſs by his eyes, as a tale paſſeth through his ears, which he heedeth not, nor applieth his mind unto, but fixeth his eye and mind upon them, lodgeth them in his memory, frequently reflecteth upon them, repeateth and re-conſidereth them in his thoughts; that is a *wiſe man, and he ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord:* And

that

that brings me to the ſecond Queſtion in the Explication of the Propoſition.

Queſt. 2. *How is he wiſe? how is it an argument of wiſdom? and doth he appear to be a wiſe man, who obſerveth theſe workings of Providence?*

Wiſdom is ſometimes taken in a *larger ſenſe*, ſo a knowing underſtanding man is a wiſe man; ſometimes *in a ſtricter ſenſe*, as it ſignifieth a *practical habit*, directing the *life and converſation*; ſometimes as comprehending both, and ſo I ſhall take it in the Propoſition. He is a *wiſe man*, he will have more knowledg and underſtanding than another man, and will know better how to order and direct himſelf in the ſeveral parts of his Converſation:

1. *He will be a more knowing and underſtanding man.* We uſe to ſay, *Experience is the miſtris of fools:* Experience maketh a fool wiſe, and indeed without it notions give little wiſdom; we ſpeak in the commendation of the ableſt perſons, in any *art* or *profeſſion*, ſuch a one is an *experienced man*; and the more experienced any one is in his art, or courſe, the better you account him in it. Nothing is ſo well learned by *rule* and *precept*, as by *example* and *preſident*. Hence it is a common maxim of theſe times, *That the ſtudy of books accompliſheth none ſo much, as the ſtudy of men doth.* Knowledg is much increaſed by experimental obſervation. By this, *Much of the knowledg of God will be let into the ſoul.* We cannot ſee God as he is, in his own light we muſt behold him, *in his word, and in his works.* From the Word of God we get a great knowledg of God, what he is as to his *Divine Being*, and in his *glorious Attributes*; but the *knowledg* which we have of God from his Word, is both *confirmed* in us, and increaſed by his *works of Providence*; and our obſervation of them, as well as of his great work of *Creation.* And that,

1. *As they eſtabliſh the Propoſition of the word, and confirm our faith in it.* Pſal. 48. 8. *As we have heard, ſo have we ſeen in the city of our God, God will eſtabliſh it for ever.* Demonſtration confirms us in our notions. The Church had before learned it, that God would eſtabliſh his Church; but now they were confirmed in it, when they had ſeen it in the Works of Providence, what they had before heard from the mouth of

Gods Prophets and Messengers: indeed a notion is but a probationer in our souls, until we come to have it established by Faith and Demonstration.

2. *An observation of Providence doth also increase knowledg, as it expounds to us the word of God, and giveth us a more certain, clear, and distinct knowledg of the revelations of it.* We do not know how to expound *some words of God*, but as we are taught the meaning of them by his Providential Dispensations in the fulfilling of it. Gods dispensations in the world, both toward his Church, and the enemies and persecutors, help us to understand both his promises and his threatnings.

2. He who observeth the motions of Divine Providence, *will also know better how to order and direct his life.* I told you, that *Wisdom* strictly taken, is a practical habit directing this: He that thus observeth, will best know how to order his Conversation. But will some say, Is not this to *make Providence our rule*? I answer, It is one thing to make the *Providence of God an argument to justifie our actions, which the word condemneth: Another thing to take occasions from Providence for the performance of our duty.* Providence alone is no rule of our actions; but the word, which is the rule of our actions, is more sealed and confirmed to us by Providence. Though Providences give no rule, yet they wonderfully confirm and establish a rule; when what we have read and heard in the word, we see in the dealings of God, it giveth a new life, and makes a new impression of the rule upon our hearts. God hath said, *Blood-thirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days:* and *honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God give thee.* Now when we see God cutting off cruel and bloody men in the strength of their years, or cutting off a stubborn and rebellious Child in his youth; it wonderfully confirmeth the word to us, and helpeth us to guide our Conversation, so as we may not tread in their steps, and be partakers of their Judgments.

2. Again, Though Providence *be no rule as to particular actions, yet it is a great help to us, as to the three great principles of all our spiritual actions:* which are *Faith, Fear, Love.* It is true, the Proposition of the word is the object of our Faith; when a soul giveth assent to the Proposition of the word, because of the Authority of God, who hath revealed it: and

this is the reaſon why wicked men, though they have the Scriptures as well as others, yet walk not in the light of them, becauſe they believe them not, they aſſent not to the Propoſitions of Truth that are revealed in them; but either ſay in their heart, That it is but the fancy and invention of men, or elſe flatter themſelves with the hopes of impunity, ſaying with thoſe in *Deuteronomy*, *That they ſhall have peace, although they walk according to the imaginations of their own hearts.* But now when a man obſerveth the Providence of God exemplifying, and verifying the Word of God; it much helps his *faith in the word*, eſpecially as to thoſe in whoſe heart God hath wrought a previous habit of Faith. It is true, in this caſe the Providences of God will do little alone: we have the words of Chriſt, *They have Moſes and the Prophets: if they will not believe, they will not believe if one ſhould riſe from the dead:* But where a ſoul is firſt taught of God to give a credit to his word, if his faith be weak and languid, the exemplifying of the thing revealed in the Word of God, by the iſſues of Providence, tendeth much to the confirmation of the ſouls faith and aſſent; and therefore it is laid to the charge of the *Iſraelites*, as a great aggravation of their ſins, *That they believed not for all his wondrous works.* And this was the great aggravation of the ſin of the *Phariſees* and the *Jews*, that lived in the time, when our Saviour was upon the Earth; that although the Providence of God had declared Chriſt to be the Son of God, by his doing ſuch works, as no man ever did, and by ſuch evident ſigns and tokens, as never before were declared as to any man, yet they believed him not to be the Son of God.

2. As *Faith* is one great principle of all our ſpiritual actions, ſo *Fear* is another. Now the obſerving of Divine Providences much conduceth to this: It is particularly remark't by the Holy Ghoſt, upon the ſudden death of *Ananias* and *Saphira*, *That a great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard of thoſe things:* And in the Law of *Moſes* you ſhall find God commanding exemplary Juſtice to be done upon ſome remarkable offenders for this very end, *That all Iſrael might hear and fear.* It is particularly ſaid, *Jonah* 1. 16. When *Jonah* had told them the cauſe of the ſtorm, and they had thrown him over-board; *Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered ſacrifices, and made vows.* Severe Providences without

the word make men ſtartle, and put them into a paſſion of fear; but when they follow a *word of threatning*, and they do but ſee God doing what in his word he hath ſaid he will do: this muſt needs have a great power and influence upon the heart, eſpecially upon the hearts of ſuch as before had an habit of Divine Fear wrought in them, though it were ſmothered with the aſhes of too much carnal ſecurity.

3. *Love to God is a third principle of ſpiritual action*: an habit wrought in the ſoul of every Child of God, but not at all times ſo lively, and quick, and working as it ought to be. Now the obſervation of Gods good and gracious Providences, ſerves hugely to excite it, and to blow up the Coals of it in the ſoul, *Pſal.* 37. 23. *O love you the Lord all his Saints! for the Lord preſerveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.* But this will be further enlarged upon in my diſcourſe upon the ſecond branch of the Propoſition, which I now come to diſcourſe upon.

Mem. 2. *Whoſo obſerveth the Providences of God, he ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.*

I take the word *underſtand* here to ſignifie three things: 1. *Knowledg.* 2. *A more clear and diſtinct knowledg.* 3. *A more demonſtrative and experimental knowledg.*

1. *He ſhall know the loving-kindneſs of the Lord*; underſtand it with reference to the Church and People of God: for Gods Providence is like the Cloud, which conducted the *Iſraelites* out of *Egypt*, and through the Red-ſea; it hath a light-ſide, which hath an aſpect upon Gods *Iſrael*, and it hath a black and dark-ſide towards his enemies. Now he who obſerveth Divine Providence, will know this, *That all the ways of the Lord are mercy, and truth to thoſe that fear God*, Pſal. 25. 10. A ſlight and tranſient view of Divine Providence, will not bring a man to the knowledg of this; but a wiſt view and obſervation of Divine Providence in the courſe and ſeries of it will do it. The word of God ſpeaketh much of the Love and Favour of God to his People. *Providence* to the ſtrict and conſtant obſerver of it, will confirm all theſe words: God himſelf (ſpeaking after the manner of men to *Abraham*) ſpeaks as if he had not known his love and obedience to him, till he had made an experiment of it, and ſaw that he would

not

not have withheld from him his Son, even his only Son. We know nothing of the loving-kindneſs of God, before we ſee it experimented, and brought into demonſtration, in compariſon with what we know upon ſuch an evidence: and this we gain by our conſiderate obſervation of the motions of Divine Providence.

2. He who obſerveth the motions of Providence, ſhall have *a more diſtinct knowledg of the loving-kindneſs of God.* He ſhall not only know that God is good to *Iſrael*, and to all that are of a clean heart; but he ſhall alſo ſee ſomething of the Methods of God in the exerciſe of his loving-kindneſs. When we ſpeak of the Love and Favour of God to his People, we are prone to underſtand by it, nothing but pleaſing Providences, grateful to our ſenſes: now the *loving-kindneſs* of God is not only ſeen in pleaſing diſpenſations, but in adverſe Providences alſo; *Whom he loveth, he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every child whom he receiveth: All things are yours* (ſaith the Apoſtle). This knowledg muſt be gained by *obſervation.* Senſe looks upon croſs diſpenſations of Providence, and it may be Reaſon judging of them from preſent appearances, and effects, cryeth out, *All theſe things are againſt me:* Here is nothing of promiſed loving-kindneſs in all this. *Is his mercy clean gone? doth his promiſe fail for evermore?* But whoſo obſerveth Divine Providence, will in theſe things alſo underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord, and know that it is the method of Divine Providence, to deal out the loving-kindneſs of God to the Souls of his People, through croſſes and tryals, and afflictions, in a way, which at preſent they do not underſtand and know, but ſhall know hereafter. *No affliction* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *is joyous at preſent, but grievous; but it bringeth forth afterward, the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs, to them that are exerciſed thereby,* Heb. 12. 11.

3. *Underſtanding* (thirdly) *may ſignifie experience*; and indeed, there is no ſuch underſtanding as experience gives. Every Child of God that obſerveth Divine Providence, ſhall find it (let the wind of it blow which way it will) giving him an experiment and demonſtration of the Love of God to his Soul. But thus much ſhall ſerve to have ſpoken to the Explication of this Propoſition in both branches. I come to the proof of it, to ſhew you how it appeareth, That he who obſerveth the motions of Divine Providence, and he alone ſhall underſtand

the loving-kindneſs of the Lord. It will appear to you if you but conſider,

1. *That however things go in the courſe of Providence; yet it is moſt certain that they are mercy, and truth to them who fear God.* For this we have a certain word: *Pſalm* 25. 10, *All the paths of the Lord are mercy, and truth unto ſuch as keep his Covenant, and his Teſtimonies.* And again, *Pſalm* 73. 1, *Truly God is good to Iſrael.* In my former Diſcourſe, I ſhewed you three Objects of ſpecial Providence: 1. *Rational creatures* are a more *ſpecial object* of Providence, than either inanimate or brute creatures. 2. Amongſt rational Creatures, thoſe men and women in the World which make up *the Church*, are more peculiar and ſpecial objects of Providence, than all others in the World. 3. Amongſt them *ſuch as fear and love God in ſincerity*, are yet the more peculiar objects of Divine Providence; and which God hath a moſt peculiar regard unto, which maketh a cogent argument to prove, That ſuppoſing the glory of God to be the great end of all his providential Diſpenſations; that the Providence of God muſt moſt eminently work for the good of theſe as being ſuch, who moſt eminently ſerve the great end of his Glory. So as he who obſerveth the motions of it, muſt needs by them underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord towards them.

Secondly, *The mercy and truth of Gods ways towards them that fear him, are not to be read in the ſurface of preſent Providences.* The dark ſide of the cloud, is ſometimes towards the *Iſrael* of God; and at ſuch a time it muſt be by Faith, that we underſtand that the ways, all the ways of the Lord, are mercy and truth toward his own people. Who could read the loving-kindneſs of the Lord towards *Iſrael*, while they were in *Egypt*, ſerving at the Brick-kilns, and under their great oppreſſion there? but he who obſerved the Providence of God, thus working to make them willing to go out, and take poſſeſſion of the promiſed Land, he might underſtand this. It is not every motion of Providence, but the iſſues of it, that demonſtrate all the ways of the Lord to be mercy and truth; and this evinceth to us, that an *obſervation* of the motions of Divine Providence, yea, and a wiſt, and diligent, and continuing, obſervation of them alſo, is neceſſary to make us underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord. I come now to the Application of what you have heard upon this Argument.

This

This in the first place sheweth us *one great reason of that ignorance which is in men, both concerning God, and concernng their own duty. Men know little of God,* and little, how to govern their actions according to any degree of Christian prudence. As ignorance of, and unbelief in, the Word of God is one great cause; so their not observing the motions of Divine Providence, which have been in the World, is another no small cause of it. Men are much ignorant of God; indeed there is but little of the knowledg of God in the World, especially that knowledg, which floateth not only in the brain, but influenceth the heart and affections; and men know little how to govern their actions by any spiritual wisdom, but live directly contrary to what they own, and pretend to as their highest end. And we understand as little of the loving-kindness of the Lord; I say, one great cause of this is mens not observing the workings and motions of Providence. They pass before their eyes every day, but they observe them not: *Non tantum oculis intueri, sed animum ad hanc considerationem ita excuscitare, ut meliores inde evadamus*; "To ob-"serve, signifieth not only with our eyes to behold it; but so "to stir up our minds to the consideration of a thing, that we "may grow the better by it, (saith a grave *Author*). Now in this Notion of it, how few are they that observe *these things?* they see stupendious Providences, sometimes, in the destruction of the Churches Enemies for the salvation of his people: it may be at first they (as all new things do) affect men with a little passion, according to the nature of them; but they are like a *flash* of *lightning*, which though at present it startles us, yet the impression is presently off our spirits: and I say, this is one great reason why we are so ignorant of God, so unskilful in the government of our lives to his ends, and that we understand so little of his loving-kindness.

Hence it is, *that we cannot understand how much good God doth his Church, and people by afflictions and trials.* They are the sensible frowns of Providence which blind our eyes, that we cannot see the loving-kindness of God in all his ways. We think sometimes we see God driving his Chariot in a direct road to his great ends, the glory of his holy Name, and the good and protection of such as fear him, here we think we can easily discern Gods Wisdom, and as easily understand his loving-kindness: But now

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when the Lord drives his Chariot out of our ſight, and exerciſeth his Church, or the particular ſouls of his people with long and tedious Afflictions, here we are at a loſs, and can neither read the wiſdom nor loving-kindneſs of God. But what is the reaſon of this, but only our ſuperficial view of Gods Providences without a wiſt, and diligent obſervation of them. If we would but bend our minds, to obſerve what a wholſom influence Afflictions and adverſe Providences have ordinarily both upon vvhole Churches, and upon particular Chriſtians, we ſhould even in them eaſily underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord. The Husbandman can eaſily underſtand that he could as ill want the froſts and ſnows of Winter, as the warmth, heat and ſun-ſhine of the Summer. *Gideon* taught the *men of Succoth with briars and thorns:* and God ordinarily doth ſo teach his people. *Bleſſed is he* (ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*), *whom thou chaſteneſt and teacheſt out of thy Law. David* tells us, *Pſalm* 119. 61, that *before he was afflicted, he went aſtray*; but ſince that he had learned to *keep the ſtatutes of the Lord.* It was an old ſaying, *The blood of the Martyrs is the ſeed of the Church.* The Church is bettered, and the Soul is bettered by adverſe Providences. That Text, *Iſa.* 27. 9, is very remarkable: *By this* [that is, by this ſevere affliction, by this captivity] *ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged: and all the fruit ſhall be to take away ſin, when the Lord ſhall make the ſtones of the altar as chalk-ſtones that crumble in pieces, the groves, and the images ſhall not ſtand up.* As an hard Winter keepeth under, and killeth the weeds: ſo the winter of Affliction much helps to the purging out of corruptions, both out of the Church, and alſo out of the particular Soul. *Auguſtine* (as I remember) ſomewhere lamenteth, *That a Fever had done more with him to ſubdue, and mortifie a luſt than before the love of God could do with him.* Now I ſay, our not obſerving this, which is matter of no difficult obſervation to him that wiſtly eyeth Divine Providence, is one great reaſon, that men do not underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

Another reaſon of mens not underſtanding it, is *their making of a judgment of Gods works before they are perfect.* If any of us ſhould go into a Limners ſhop, and ſee his firſt draught of a lovely picture; we ſhould diſcern little lovelineſs in it, which yet we ſhould eaſily diſcern if we would but ſtay until he had finiſhed his work, and laid on his life-colours. It is the ſame caſe with us as to works of Divine Providence; we look on them while the

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Lords work is yet upon the wheel, we ſee nothing in it that reſembleth God the great workman: we ſee in it nothing of the Divine Wiſdom, poſſibly nothing of the divine goodneſs and loving-kindneſs; but could we have patience till the Lords work came off the wheel, we ſhould eaſily ſee it in quite another repreſentation: we often ſee in Gods works of Providence nothing but confuſion, and blood, and trouble, and multiplied troubles, and diſturbances to thoſe who moſt fear him, and deſire to walk moſt cloſely with him: *But in the evening of that day* (ſaith the Prophet, *Zech.* 14. 6,) *it ſhall be light.* The day neither light nor dark, but in the Evening it ſhall be light. Gods peoples days ſometimes are plainly darkneſs, thick darkneſs: but would we have patience to the evening of them, we ſhould ſee light. The Evening is the cloſe and making up of the day. When God cometh to cloſe up his days work, did we but obſerve *Divine Providence*, we ſhould eaſily underſtand that it would be light. Sorrow may be for a night, but joy ſhall be in the morning. So as I ſay again, This is one great reaſon, why at all times we cannot underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord to his Church and his people, becauſe we do not obſerve the motions of Divine Providence, but take only a ſlight and ſuperficial view of them.

I ſhall conclude this Diſcourſe with an Exhortation to the duty of the Text, The *obſervation of the motions of Divine Providence.* In my laſt diſcourſe I diſcovered to you, ſome unſearchable things in Divine Providence, and cautioned you againſt too curious an Enquiry into them: My buſineſs now is to call upon you, *non cæcutire in revelatis*, not to be blind as to thoſe things which God hath revealed. This alſo is your duty as well as the other: by the former you acquit your ſelves from an unwarrantable curioſity, by this from a wretched unthankfulneſs. The Providence of God is daily working, in order to the fulfilling of Gods great end, the glorifying of his great and holy Name, the eſtabliſhing of his people, *&c.* *Uſe* 2.

1. *Do not reſt in a meer view of what is done in the World, but fix your eyes upon it.* Lay up the things in your heart, let your thoughts dwell upon them, the remarkable paſſages of them eſpecially. You ſee and hear of Wars, and rumours of Wars, inundations, fires, changes, and over-turning in Nations; of powers and Dominions: you at preſent underſtand not the tenden-

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cies and indications of them, you cannot make up a judgment of them, and prophecy what will and ſhall be from them; but yet obſerve them, lay up theſe things in your minds, yea, and let them not paſs out of your minds: as we are to *hear for the time to come*, ſo we are to *behold* and *obſerve* the motions of Providence with a reſpect unto a time to come too. Do not think, you can expound every Providence preſently; the *viſion* oft-times is *for an appointed time*, and is to be expounded by time; in the mean time, only to be diligently marked and obſerved, taken notice of as a great work of God, the meaning of which we ſhall underſtand hereafter. Divines ſay, That the meaning of many Providences, and our clear underſtanding of them, is one of thoſe things wherein our knowledg ſhall be bettered and perfected in the day of Judgment; and till that time, when the hidden things of God, as well as of men ſhall be made manifeſt, we muſt be content to *know but in part*.

2. Do not ſecondly obſerve meer *ſingle acts of Divine Providence, but let your Eye follow it in its motions*. God ſometimes hath his works a long time upon the wheel, eſpecially thoſe relating to his Church. I will give you two famous inſtances: 1. *The eſtabliſhing of his ancient Church of the Jews in Canaan*. The promiſe was out for it, *Gen.* 12, to *Abraham*; it was more than five hundred years, before this work was off the wheel of Providence: four hundred years before they went out of *Egypt*, where they were in bondage; forty years they travelled in the wilderneſs, then during all the time of the Judges: yea, and in *Sauls time too*, they were but in a very unquiet condition. In *David* and *Solomon*'s time, they came to a ſetled eſtate in the promiſed Land. There was a Promiſe given out unto Chriſt, for having *the ends of the earth for his poſſeſſion*: *David* mentioneth it; *Iſaiah* propheſieth much of it. After this *Chriſt* comes, was crucified, *&c.* And it was three hundred years after this, before theſe Promiſes had any conſiderable accompliſhment. Indeed as to particular perſons, their beings are of ſhorter duration, and the Providence of God brings about the promiſes to them, in much ſhorter periods, or they could ſee nothing of *Gods loving-kindneſſes* in the iſſues, or contextures of them: but take heed there of reſting your Eye upon the obſervations of ſome ſingle acts of providence relating to them; thoſe who ſhould thus have obſerved the motions of Providence with reference to *Abraham*, *Jacob*, *Joſeph*,

ſeph, David, Daniel, Job, would have ſeen little of that loving-kindneſs of the Lord to them, which yet is evident enough to all that keep their Eye upon their ſtory, to the winding up of their bottoms. Now to this obſervation of Providence, you have two great Arguments in the Text: 1. *It is an Indication of ſpiritual Wiſdom.* A wiſe man looketh not only at preſent things, but at things paſt, and yet to come. Now Wiſdom is a lovely thing; *It is juſtified of her children* (ſaith our Saviour). Every man deſireth the reputation of a wiſe man, and ſtudiouſly avoideth the reproach of a fool. Two things ſpeak a fool: 1. *To obſerve and mind nothing.* Or 2dly, Meerly to *take notice of things preſent*, and gather concluſions from them. 2. *Thus you ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of God.* Then you will ſee that all the paths of God towards his Church, are mercy and truth. *Truth*, not a word failing of the promiſe; and *mercy*, working for the good of them that love God: yea thus, you that fear the Lord ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs, and truth of God to your particular ſouls. A thing, the evidence of which is, and ought to be of more value to you than the whole World. I will conclude my Diſcourſe by giving you three Cautions to direct your obſervation.

1. *Obſerve the Providence of God, when it ſeemeth to move contrary to his Word; but never determine the Indication of it without the Word.* Indeed, the Providence of God never moveth contrary to the Word, it is always a ſervant to ſome Declaration of the will of God, in ſome promiſe, or threatning, but it often ſeemeth to us to move contrary: which made the *Pſalmiſt* cry out, *Doth the promiſe fail for evermore?* The reaſon of this φαινόμενον, that deceiveth us, is our imperfect knowledg, or underſtanding of the Word of God, and non-acquaintance with the Counſels of God, and contrivances of his Wiſdom, and the variety of thoſe deſigns which he carrieth on at the ſame time. God deſigns to bring the *Jews into Canaan*; but along with this to carry on the deſtruction of the *Egyptians*, the *Amorites* (whoſe ſins in *Abrahams* time were not come to the full): the deſtruction of the rebellious and diſobedient amongſt the *Iſraelites*. Now in order to this, the *Egyptians* muſt ripen themſelves for their ruin, by their oppreſſion of *Iſrael:* The *Amalekites*, and *Amorites*, and the other Nations by their falling upon them at their coming out of *Egypt*, and in their journey. Now upon theſe accounts, the *Providence of God* often ſeemed to move quite contrary to the word

of Promise. The people of *Israel* at the Red-sea, and in the Wilderness, looked very unlike a people that should have a quiet possession of *Canaan*: Therefore I say, Providence is to be observed in its Motions, which seem contrary to the Word; but the Indications of it are only to be determined from the Word. God hath appointed wicked men to slaughter; notwithstanding this we see most vile and wicked men, thriving, prospering, growing great in the World, and trampling the righteous servants of God under their foot. Observe this, but take heed of determining the Indication of this but from the Word, which saith, *There is no peace to them*: keep therefore thine Eye upon their Tabernacles, and thou shalt see the Lords Sun go off it, and the Threatning verified.

2. *Compare present Providences with those that are past.* As those who will *understand the letter of Scripture*, must compare *Text with Text*: so those who will be wise by understanding the motions of *Providence*, must compare *Providences* of a present age, with *Providences of former ages*. Thou art offended possibly at the Providences of God towards wicked men: they thrive and prosper, they grow mighty and encrease, and do what they list. Or at the Providences of God towards those, who (if thou canst judg) are such as walk closest with God, and are most severe worshippers and servants of him: they are hated, maligned, exposed to all manner of injuries, which may make their lives bitter to them. Thou cryest out here, *O the depth!* I cannot understand the ways of God, I cannot see his loving-kindness towards his people. Compare now (Christian!) Gods dealing in thy age with his dealings both with wicked men, and with his sincere servants in former ages, and see if they be not much alike with what they were: In *Jobs time*, and *Davids time*, and *Jeremiah's time*. Yet it is not hard for thee to understand how the servants of God in those times found the loving-kindness of God, and experienced that all the ways of the Lord were *mercy and truth*: believe that the Hand of the Lord is not weakned, nor his Arm shortened, nor his Truth failed.

3. Lastly, If you would by observing the Providence of God understand his loving-kindness, and gain a *spiritual wisdom*, *Let your eye affect your heart*. I hinted to you before, that *Mollerus* telleth us, such an observation of Providence is here intended, *unde ad pietatem excitemur, ut inde meliores evadamus*, as

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will quicken us unto piety, and help to make us better. There are *many careleſs obſervers of Providence*, that indeed ſee Events rather than Providences; they ſee much that comes to paſs in the World, but conſider nothing of God in them: they ſee *great fires* laying populous Cities waſt, and poſſibly ſee a *villain* putting the firſt coal to them, or a careleſs perſon accidentally occaſioning them; but they do not ſee God, throwing ſuch a wretch off his hand of reſtraint, nor blowing the coals that turn the Cities into aſhes, by his winds, which men could not cauſe. Others are curious *obſervers of Providences:* theſe are wonderfully buſily employed in ſearching out the *natural cauſes* of ſuch *thunders, lightnings, inundations, devouring peſtilences*, &c. They do by the book of Providence, as *Auguſtine* complain'd of himſelf, that in his unregenerate ſtate he did by the book of Scripture; he rather brought to it *diſcutiendi acumen*, than *diſcendi pietatem*. So men bring to the great Works of God rather an acute Eye, and wit to find out the immediate cauſes, and reaſons natural or political, than a *trembling, humble* heart, that they might learn by them more to acknowledg, *love, fear, adore*, and revere the great and mighty God whoſe works theſe are: let not yours be ſuch an obſervation; but let your Eye beholding God in his providential Diſpenſations, affect your hearts with that adoration, and veneration, that love and fear of the great and mighty God, which ſuch works of God do call to you for.

But for the further hopes and conſolation of the people of God in their ſtates of affliction, I intend to commend to you ſome principal Obſervations upon the motions of Divine Providence; which ſhall be the work (if God pleaſeth) of ſome ſucceeding Exerciſes.

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But for the further hopes and conſolation of the people of God in their ſtates of affliction, I intend to commend to you ſome principal Obſervations upon the motions of Divine Providence; which ſhall be the work (if God pleaſeth) of ſome ſucceeding Exerciſes.

SERMON XV.

Pſalm CVII. 43.

Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things: even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

I Am diſcourſing concerning Divine Actual Providence, as the Object of good mens *obſervation*. I ſhewed you in my laſt Diſcourſe, That the obſervation of the motions of it, is both an *Indication* of ſpiritual Wiſdom, and an excellent ſtep towards it; and that by it duly made, men and women ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord. Now to advantage you a little in this Obſervation, I ſhall give you an account of ſome obſervable things in the motions of Providence, which poſſibly you may parallel in the preſent or future dealings of God, both with his Church, and with particular Souls. I ſhall lay down my firſt Obſervation thus:

1. Obſerv. *The Actual Providence of God, in bringing about that word to which it is a certain ſervant, doth rarely move in a direct line, but ſometimes obliquely, ſometimes to our appearance quite contrary: but at laſt it fulfilleth the word, and is all the while faithfully executing the Eternal Counſel.*

There are three things in this Obſervation, each of which I will open in a few words, and then endeavour to juſtifie the obſervation by particular inſtances: after which, I ſhall give you ſome reaſonable account of it, and then make ſome ſhort Application.

Firſt (I ſay), *The Providence of God, is a certain ſervant to the word*: the word either of *Promiſe*, or of *Threatning*; for Pro-

vidence ſerveth to the execution of them both: *As we have heard, ſo have we ſeen in the City of our God*, ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. 48. 8: the Promiſe is but *providentia occultata*, and Providence is but *promiſſio explicata*, the Promiſe fully explained and opened: and this is no more than you ſhall find recognized by the holy Servants of God, both in all their thankſgivings for mercies they had received, and in all their humiliations upon any judgments, which the Lord had brought on them, as alſo in all the Narrative parts of Scripture, declaring any great motions of Providence: how often do you meet with it in the Goſpel, ſuch or *ſuch a thing was done*, that it might be fulfilled, *which was ſpoken by the Prophet*, &c. *Dan.* 2. 12, *He hath confirmed his word which he hath ſpoken againſt our Judges*, &c. which way ſoever Providence worketh; whether in a way of ſenſible good, or ſenſible evil, againſt any perſons, people, or places, it is purſuant to, and in fulfilling of ſome word of God.

But (ſecondly), I ſay, it moveth not always, yea *it moveth ſeldom in a direct line, in order to the fulfilling of that word to which it is a Servant*; and here I ſhall take notice of three things obſervable.

1. *Ordinarily at firſt it ſeemeth to move directly towards the end which we have in our eye:* this you will better underſtand by and by, when I come to give you inſtances in the proof of it.

2. Sometimes it moveth *obliquely*, ſeeming to be driving another deſign.

3. Sometimes to our appearance *directly contrary*.

But thirdly, I ſay at laſt *it comes home to the Promiſe:* and ſo lets us ſee, that all the while it hath been but a faithful ſervant to the Counſel of God. But I ſhall make you underſtand this better by the inſtances, by which I ſhall in the next place endeavour to juſtify and eſtabliſh the Obſervation, to which I now come; and ſhall particularize in four or five inſtances:

The firſt inſtance I ſhall give of it, ſhall be *that great work of Divine Providence*, in bringing the *poſterity of Abraham* into a quiet poſſeſſion of the Land of *Canaan*. The Promiſe went out from God, *Gen.* 12. 2, *I will make of thee a great Nation, and I will bleſs thee, and make thy name great; and unto thy ſeed will I give this Land.* This Promiſe was given out to *Abraham*, when the World was little more than two thouſand years old: It was above two hundred years after this that *Jacob* with his Family

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(not exceeding seventy persons) went down into *Egypt*: How slowly did the Providence of God move as to that part of the promise, which concerned the multiplication of *Abrahams* seed. After the giving out of the Promise, *Abraham* first fleeth into *Egypt* for the Famine: *Gen.* 13. 12, You have him again returned into *Canaan*, *Gen.* 13. 18. He is told, that notwithstanding this Promise, his seed should be servants in a Land that was not theirs. *Ver.* 16, *But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again. Abraham dieth*, seized of this good Land: *Isaac* succeeds him, and dies there too. *Jacob* first is forced to flee to *Padan-aram*: returning from thence, he is compel'd by the Famine to go down into *Egypt*; where after his and *Josephs* death, the posterity of *Abraham*, for the multiplication of which the promise was out so many years before, was attempted to be diminished, and destroyed by all acts imaginable. The *Midwives* are practised with to stifle their Infants in the birth: when that will not do, others must be employed to throw the Males into the River; the Parents are afflicted with the highest degree of oppression. At length, the *Providence* of God begins to turn toward the Promise. The *Israelites* are allowed to come away: but they had gone but a little way, but they see the Red-sea before them, the ~~Philistines~~ Aegyptians behind them: one would have thought that now they had been far enough from any prospect of *Canaan*. *Providence* by a miraculous operation brings them over this Mountain of difficulty: but whither do they come? into a long and howling Wilderness: one while they are assaulted with Famine, vvant of Bread, then of Meat, another time with drought; then again assaulted with Enemies, set upon with fiery flying Serpents; at last they come within prospect of the desired Land: But on the sudden for their murmuring, are turned back to forty years wandering. When they get over *Jordan*, they meet with seven Nations more strong and mighty than they, who must all be subdued before they could have possession of *Canaan*: at last, the *Providence of God* comes home to the Promise; *Joshuah* their Captain having first conquered the Land, divides it amongst them: yet after this they were far from a quiet possession of it; all the time of the *Judges*, or indeed till *Saul, or Davids time*. What staange circulations, and windings of Divine Providence were here in the accomplishment of the Promises? how little to an humane Eye the Providence of God seem'd to mind the promise

mise *of multiplying Abrahams seed for* above two hundred years? *Abraham* had but one Son of the promise; and that when he was very old and past hopes of children. *Isaac* had but one neither that was an heir of the Promise, that was *Jacob: Jacob* had indeed twelve, and these in the remaining space of that time were multiplied but to seventy (besides *Joseph* in *Egypt*), how quite contrary to the *Promise* did *Providence* seem to move all the while that the *Israelites* were in *Egypt?* yea and after too, how often would one have judged that the people guessed right? when in their impatience they complained, that God had brought them out of *Egypt* to destroy them in the Wilderness; yet at last Gods work was done, *Providence* faithfully served the *Promise*, and gave a Being to the Word of the Lord given out, *Gen.* 12.

2. Let the second instance be that of *Joseph. Joseph* had a promise, *Gen.* 37; I know it was a dream, but it was the revelation of Gods will to him in that dream; That there should come a time, when all his Fathers house should bow to him: all their sheaves should bow down to his. Now observe how *Providence* moveth in bringing this Word of the Lord to pass. *Joseph is hated of his brethren*, hardly escapeth with his life; at length is sold into *Egypt*, and into *Potiphars* house; here now he was brought to Court, but no sooner doth he grow into Reputation, that there was any appearance of his rising to any degree of Dignity, that might look towards a fulfilling of the promise; but he is accused by his Mistris, thrown into prison, like enough to lose his life; but after this Providence turneth again, raiseth him to a great degree of Dignity; makes him the second man in *Egypt*, and what God had told him in his dream, was all fulfilled: his Father and his Brethren, all come and bow down to him.

3. A third instance shall be that of *David*, *the promise of the Kingdom*, was given out to *David* in the day, when *Samuel* by order from God anointed him, 1 *Sam.* 16. In the 17*th* Chap. The *Providence* of God so ordereth it, that *Saul* having made a Proclamation, That if any man would encounter *Goliah*, the Champion of the *Philistines* who defied the Armies of *Israel*, he should have his Daughter to Wife. *David* coming to the Army, accepts his Challenge, fighteth, and slayeth him, and obtaineth *Sauls daughter*. *Jonathan Sauls* Son, taketh a great kindness to him, the people admire him: Here now the *Providence* of God, at first setting out, moves as if *David* should presently have *come to the*

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Kingdom: but after this *Saul* falls out with *David*, uſeth all arts to take away his life, purſueth him with an Army from place to place: *David* had a pitiful company with him, is forced to flee to *Gath*, there to diſſemble himſelf mad; would any one have thought that had ſeen *David* among the *Philſtines*, ſcrambling on the walls, that he ſhould ever have been King over *Iſrael* and *Judah?* At length *Saul*, and *Jonathan* (the next heir) are ſlain in Battel; then *Iſhboſheth* is ſet up: but yet after all theſe oblique and ſeemingly contradictory motions of Providence, it cometh home to the promiſe. *David* is ſetled in the Throne of *Iſrael* and *Judah*.

4. Let a fourth inſtance be *that of the Goſpel Church:* God had promiſed, that *he would ſet his King upon the holy hill of Zion. Pſalm* 2. 6. *v.* 8, *That he would give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion:* and promiſes of this nature are everywhere multiplyed by the Prophets (*Iſaiah* eſpecially). Our Lord, when he aſcended up into Heaven, gave out a Commiſſion to his Diſciples in order to this effect: *Go preach and baptize all Nations*, &c. Now at the firſt, the Providence of God ſeemed to move as if the thing ſhould preſently have been done. You read *Acts* 2, *That the Spirit of God deſcended: and there were then at Jeruſalem* (ſaith the Text) *devout men of every Nation under Heaven: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Meſopotamians, Jews, Cappadocians*, men of *Pontus, Aſia, Phrygia, Pamphilia, Egypt, Lybians, Cyrenians, Romanes, Cretes, Arabians*, and heard the Apoſtles in their own language, ſpeaking of the great works of God. Here were now Preachers made for all the World: would not one have thought that ſurely at this time, all the ends of the Earth ſhould have been given unto Chriſt? *Peter* at one Sermon converts *two thouſand:* ſoon after there were *five thouſand* added to the Church. But all on the ſudden the Providence of God turneth, the Goſpel groweth out of repute, and the Apoſtles that preached it too, both with *Jews* and *Gentiles*. *James* is put to death, *Peter* hardly eſcapes. The Church (the only Goſpel-church God had at that time) at *Jeruſalem* was ſcattered and broken: the Apoſtle complains, That *they were made as the filth of the world, and as the off-ſcouring of all things*. The *Jews* perſecute them, the *Gentiles* in all places riſe up againſt the Preachers of the Goſpel: *bonds, ſtripes*, and *impriſonments*, waited for the Apoſtles in all places where they came:

came: *Paul* saith he thought, that *God had set them forth as men appointed unto death; spectacles to the World, Angels and men.* Few of the great Ministers of the Gospel died their natural death; the *Christians* were *a sect everywhere spoken against*; all courses almost imaginable taken to root them out of all places for three hundred years together. But at length, the Providence of God cometh in a great measure to work up to the direct fulfilling of the many promises of this nature. *Constantine* an Emperour of a great part of the World, ariseth and commandeth, and encourageth the preaching of the Gospel. And thus it came to be spread, and accepted in most known parts of the World. Indeed, there is hardly any instance can be given of any great work of Providence, respecting Churches, Nations, or particular persons, as to which this Observation will not justifie it self.

5. For another instance may we not bring in, if not all, yet very many of your particular Souls, who fear the Lord. You also upon *believing* receive the promises: The promises are made of old, but we *receive them:* we come to have a title to them, in the day when God opens our eyes, and opens our hearts to a receiving of the Lord Jesus Christ, turning our hearts from dead lusts and sins to serve the living God. In that day, I say, we have a first right to all the Promises, whether respecting joy, and peace or spiritual strength and assistances. Now very often at the first of our conversion, the Providence of God moves directly towards them: the Soul finds a great life to Duty, a great zeal against sin, great joy and peace in believing, glimpses of the glory of God. But after this very ordinarily follow very dark hours, and the Soul like *Jonah* cryes out of the *belly of Hell*. The Soul that *feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his Servant, yet walketh in the dark, and seeth no light*, cryeth out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* and hath a thousand fair and foul days in its journey to Heaven. I know particular cases must here be excepted: but I speak of the ordinary Methods of Divine Providence, with Souls whom God bringeth to glory.

6. I will conclude this Discourse with the instance of the great work of *Providence* in the *Reformation of his Church* in this latter age; whether you look upon it in *Germany*, *France*, or *England*. In *Germany* it began with *Luther* (an eminent Servant of of God, though like *Elias* of like passions and infirmities with other men): how strangely did the Providence of God in the be-

ginning work towards the accompliſhment of it? That *Luther*, who was a poor *Monk*, ſhould be preſerved to plant the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and ſhould diffuſe it ſo far as he did, and be preſerved to do it againſt all the rage both of the *Pope*, *and Emperour* 28, or 29 years, was a great favour of Providence to the infantile Reformation: but afterwards, how the Providence of God gave check to it is ſufficiently known, yet it kept its ground and gained. For *England* we know from our ſtory, That King *Hen.* 8, laid the *firſt ſtone*; we alſo know how Providence at firſt favoured the work, during all the reign of *Edward* the *ſixth*; but in *Queen Maries* time, for five years togetner it ſeemed to move directly croſs; the Popiſh Superſtitions were reſtored in all parts of the Nation, Multitudes burnt for the profeſſion of the Goſpel, others fled into foreign parts to ſecure their lives. But the Providence of God returned again to its work in the time of *Queen Elizabeth*. But I have ſpoken enough to juſtifie the Obſervation.

Let me in the next place endeavour to give you a reaſonable account of theſe tranſverſe motions of *Providence:* not that I dare preſume to give you the reaſons why God moveth thus, or thus; for who hath been his Counſellor at any time? but ſo far forth, as to ſhew you that theſe motions of Providence are approvable to our Reaſon, ſo as we may judg the Lords ways but proportioned to his wiſe and great deſigns.

1. In the firſt place, certainly one reaſonable account to be given of theſe motions, muſt be *the variety of deſigns which the Providence of God ordinarily carries on together*. I have hinted this to you before; ſuffer me here to enlarge a little upon it again. I then compared *Providence* to a man of great buſineſs, and dealings in the World; who though *London*, or ſome other great place, be in his Eye as the end of his Journey where his buſineſs lies, which he doth chiefly deſign the diſpatch of; yet hath alſo other buſineſs here, and there, at this Town and that Town; and therefore ſeldom or never keepeth a road long. *Providence* is Gods great *Miniſter of State*, upon the hand of which all the effects of his Counſels and Eternal purpoſes lie, and it never driveth a ſingle deſign. The Promiſe was gone out, for the ſeed of *Abraham* to inherit *Canaan: Providence* is to bring this about, but this cannot be done till the Nations be diſpoſſeſſed, and in order thereunto the iniquities of the *Amorites muſt be full*,

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Gen. 15. 16: and God giveth *Abraham* this very reason, why his seed should not possess *Canaan* until the fourth Generation. God had designed to get himself glory upon *Pharaoh*; in order to this he must first oppress, then pursue *Israel* to the Red-sea. The *Providence* of God never carrieth on a single design, but in the fulfilling some eminent Counsel of God, referring to a person or a Nation, effects an hundred other pieces of Divine Counsel; although it may be to us not so remarkable, as that which our Eye is so much upon, and which we are so impatient for. The *Providence* of God will bring *David* to the Kingdom; but in order to it, it must also execute Divine Vengeance upon *Saul*, &c.

Secondly, *The seemingly oblique, and contradictory motions of Divine Providence, do often* (though we at first discern it not) *bear the notion, and have the nature of proper means in order to the great End.* If *Joseph* had not been *sold into Egypt*, if there he had not been thrown into a prison, how should he have been of use to save much people, and particularly his Father, and his Brethren alive? It was in prison that he had the opportunity to interpret first the Butlers dream, who recommended him to the King, and brought him before him to interpret his also, which you know was his rise to his great capacity. It was the *Israelites* affliction and oppression in the Land of *Egypt*, which made them willing to leave the *fleshpots, and Onions, and Garlick*, there to go toward *Canaan*. We use to say, *The furthest way about, is the neareſt way home*. That man makes it so, that doth a great deal of business in one journey (riding only now and then a little out of the way) which he must else have dispatched by new journeys: but it is never truer, than in the motions of *Providence*; what seemeth to us in Gods working, the furthest way about, in order to the saving of a Soul, or the preserving of his Church and making it to grow and flourish, is indeed the neareſt way to it. They say, the beating of a Walnut-tree, is the way to make it fruitful: the treading on the *Palm-tree*, the way to make it more flourish. We see in daily experience the treading down, and trampling a piece of ground, makes it the better in the Spring for grass or corn; and much spareth other *stercorations*. It is as trite an observation, That *the blood of the Martyrs* hath always *proved the seed of the Church*. *David before he was afflicted, went astray*. And this many times we can say, when a

day of Evil is over, though we could not ſo eaſily read it in the hour of his afflictive Diſpenſations either to the Church, or to particular perſons.

3. A third account of it, may be *Gods deſign to exerciſe the faith and patience of his people.* God hath determined the impenitent ſinner to deſtruction, and his people to ſalvation; but both of them muſt come to their Eternity by means. The Sinner by the purſuit of his luſts, and a continuance in them; the child of God, by the *exerciſe of his graces.* Amongſt other habits of grace, *faith* and *patience*, are not the leaſt. The exerciſe of theſe is when ſenſe faileth, and the Providence of God moveth out of our ſight, in a time of adverſity when it ſeemeth to move at a great diſtance from the Promiſe, if not directly contrary to it. *Bleſſed are they who have not ſeen, and have yet believed* (ſaith our Saviour). God gave *Abraham* a Promiſe, nay divers promiſes: two more eminent, the *one of a Child*; the other, of a *numerous ſeed*, and their *inheriting the land of Canaan.* Now if the Providence of God, had preſently moved in a direct line towards the fulfilling of theſe Promiſes, where had been a room for *Abrahams faith*, ſo much celebrated in Scripture? the Apoſtle ſaith, *Rom.* 4. 18, That *he againſt hope believed in hope,*— and *ver.* 19, *Being not weak in faith, he conſidered not his own body being now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, nor yet the deadneſs of Sarahs womb.* Ver. 20, *He ſtaggered not at the Promiſe through unbelief, but was ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully perſwaded, that what he had promiſed, he was alſo able to perform: and therefore it was imputed to him for righteouſneſs.* The *Providence* of God delayeth the time, ſuffereth *Abraham* firſt, and his Wife to live to an age, that they both were paſt any reaſonable hope of children, then it giveth him a child: why doth Providence move thus ſlowly, and obliquely? how elſe ſhould *Abrahams* faith have been tried? how ſhould it have been tried whether he would *ſtagger at the Promiſe through unbelief?* Another branch of that Promiſe was, That the child which God ſhould give him of *Sarah* his Wife *ſhould be his heir*, Gen. 15. 4. This [that is, this *Eliezer of Damaſcus* of whom thou ſpeakeſt, *ver* 2.] *ſhall not be thine heir: but he that ſhall come forth of thine own bowels, ſhall be thine heir.* Chap. 22. God by his Providence tempteth *Abraham*; He bids him *go, and with his own hands ſacrifice this his ſon, his only ſon*; what an oblique, yea contrary

trary motion of Providence doth this seem to be, to the promise of *Isaac* his being the *heir?* In *Isaac shall thy seed be called*, saith the Promise. How shall that be, when *Isaac* (who as yet had no seed) must be sacrificed? But how else shall *Abrahams faith and obedience be tried*, which standeth upon Record. *Heb.* 11. 17, By faith *Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the Promise, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead; from which he also received him in a figure.* *Abraham* had a promise of *Canaan* for his seed: Providence went a great way about before it sensibly came home to this Promise; if it had not, how had *Abrahams* faith had its exercise mentioned? *Heb.* 11. 8. *By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place, which he should afterward receive, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange Country,* &c. *God gave him no inheritance in it* (saith St. *Stephen*, Acts 7. 5,) *no not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised, that he would give it to him for his possession, and to his seed after him*, when as yet he had no children.

Fourthly, What if we should say, That God doth this, *that he might be the more admired in the works of his Providence when they came to an issue*, and have *the more of the praises and thanksgivings* of his people. We are never so deeply affected either with with the good, or evil that betideth us, as when we are surprised with it, and it comes upon us, fearing or looking for the contrary. Evils unthought-of are more heavy, and more dejecting and afflictive: Good things not look'd for, are more affecting, and raise up holy affections more to the high praises of God. Now, when the Providence of God hath moved obliquely, and to our appearance quite contrary (as we judged) unto the Promise, when it cometh home unto it, to give it a being and issue, it cometh upon us as it were upon the sudden, and contrary to the expectation of our sense and reason; and so wonderfully affects our hearts, and enforceth from us great and high acknowledgments of the *Omnipotency*, and *power of God*, of his *mercy and goodness*, of his *truth and veracity*. It is the common infirmity of our Natures, that we more know our mercies by wanting them, than by enjoying them. If the *Providence* of God moved in a right line to bring promised good to them who love and fear God, he would

would neither have so much of the *prayers* and *cryes of his people*, during the want of their desired good, nor yet so much praise upon the bestowing of it. You shall observe, That God is not so much praised for mercies of common Providence, which we receive every day (how valuable soever, as our sleep in the night, our appetite to our meat, &c.) As for such Dispensations as are more rare and extraordinary: the reason is, because we look for the former; they are common with us, and we expect them, Providence more keepeth a road as to them, than as to others. But it is time I should come to the Application of this Observation.

Use 1. In the first place, This Observation should *bespeak us aforehand, that no such oblique, and seemingly contrary motions of Providence may be any prejudice to our faith in the Promise.* Wonder not if you still see the Providence of God keeping the same Methods, that it hath alway in all the great things which it hath brought to pass in the World. Particularly, as to Gods great works relating to his Church; God hath used to begin a work in one age, which it may be he hath not finished, or will not finish till that age be out. Thus you have heard, that it was in the first plantation of the Gospel, begun in the Apostles time. Thus it hath been in the *Reformation of the Church* when corrupted; there is nothing more ordinary than this. If therefore you see any-where foundations of Reformation laid, and then the Providence of God seems to desert its work, and the foundations laid seem to be plucking up again, and all things to run in the old Channels, trouble not your selves at it; this is but an ordinary Method of Divine Providence.

Use 2. But let us secondly from hence collect *what is our duty* with reference to such times, when to our appearance the Providence of God seemeth to move obliquely, or contrary to the Promise. This I shall attempt to open to you: 1. *With reference unto God.* 2. *With reference to the Promise.* 3. *With reference unto Providence.*

1. Quest. *What is our duty relating more immediately unto God, under the posing and astenishing Dispensations of his Providence,*

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In the first place, we doubtless ought *to take heed of charging God foolishly.* I borrow the expression from *Job*, Chap. 1, *In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.* To charge God foolishly upon the account of his Providences, is by occasion of them to utter vain and foolish things that are not fit to be spoken of the *Majesty* of God; as if he failed either in his truth or mercy, or goodness to his people. It is an exellent precept of the Apostle in this case, though given in another: 1 *Cor.* 4. 5, *Judg nothing before the time.* There is a time when God will give us leave to judg of his ways, whether they be not both mercy and truth to them that fear him. Only Judg not before the time, before God hath finished his work, and brought off what he hath upon the wheel. Now it is this hasty Judgment, which is the cause of all our murmuring and repining, of all our hasty sayings, like the *Psalmist* in his passion, *Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies, Selah?* Psalm 77. 7, 8, 9. If this be the usual method of Providence in the accomplishment of Promises, to move obliquely and *contrary* (as to humane appearance) and yet at last most certainly to bring the Promise to effect; we have no reason under the oblique, or seemingly contrary motions of Providence, to charge God, as if he failed in his truth, or failed in his mercy; he is only fetching a compass in order to the verifying and justification of both. For us so much as to suspect, or to think the contrary, is to charge God foolishly, not observing, nor understanding the ordinary methods and courses of Divine Providence in accomplishing of his greatest Promises.

2. It is our duty to *admire God in those providential Dispensations, which we do not understand.* Man vainly studieth to find out God in his unsearchable Counsels and motions of Providence; *Vain man would be wise.* Now the *ways of God* (as I have shewed you) are in many things past finding out. Where we can see God in his ways of mercy, there is an opportunity for our love and thankfulness: where we cannot see him, there is an opportunity for our fear and admiration; stand upon this bottom, *That all the ways of God are mercy and truth to them that fear him:* Let nothing shake you from this foundation, nor move you from this Rock: where this is not matter of demonstration to your sense and reason, let it yet be matter of *admiration* to you. Be admiring at the

the wisdom of God, that can out of a Chaos bring order, out of darkness bring light. But secondly,

2d Quest. What (at such a time) is our duty with reference to the Promise?

1. I answer to *stand fast by it.* I would have every good Christian think at such a time as Providence (to his appearance) moveth obliquely, and contrary to the Promise, to think that he heareth it speak unto him; as Christ sometimes spake to his Disciples, *Matth* 5, *Think you that I am come to destroy the law and the Prophets? I am not come to destroy them, but to fulfil them.* I say, I would have you think you hear the Providence of God thus speaking to you, under its darkest Dispensations. Think you that I am about to destroy the Promise, or by my motions to make it of no effect? No, I am come not to destroy a tittle of a promise: *Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but not a tittle of the promise shall fail:* I am not by these motions destroying the promise; whatever your sense may dictate to you, or whatsoever your reason may prompt to you, *I am but fulfilling the promise.* Therefore I say at such a time, look to your hearts that they abide by the promise: Let it be the case of the Church in which we live, or the case of any particular Soul, still keep to the Word, the promise to the Church is sure; the promise to the particular Soul is sure: Providence is not moved out of its way, it is only got a little out of thy sight; if thou canst but wait for it, it will come into thy road again, and go with thy expectation most certainly to the fulfilling of the Promise. Take that one word, *Eccles.* 8. 12, 13, *Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged; yet surely it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God.* Consonant to which is that, *Isa.* 3. 10, 11, *Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings: Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.* Now these words both of Promise, and of Threatning, are sure words; yet such as to which the Providence of God makes our faith stagger, more than as to any other. It often goes out of what we take to be its road, in order to the accomplishment of these words: we see wicked men prospering, growing great,

great in power, honour, riches: yet their ways are such as he that runneth may read, that the fear of God is not before their eyes. Well, be it so; yet let not your hearts fail as to the promise, keep close to it: you will see Providence return to what you call its Road again. If a Sinner do evil an *hundred times*, if he liveth an hundred years; yet the Word of the Lord shall be justified upon him. So if a child of God be chastened an hundred times; if Religion, and Reformation, and the interest of God in the World be brought under the hatches an hundred times: yet *Magna est Veritas, & prævalebit*, Truth shall prevail at last, and Gods people shall have the day at last. Consider, O Christian, thou canst not give God a greater honour, than to believe when thou doest not see: This is a faith like *Abraham's*, who *believed in hope, above hope, or contrary to hope*, Rom. 4: who believed when he had nothing else to trust to, but that *God was able to raise up, and save from the dead.* Say in the prosperity of Sinners, I will have nothing to do with them: For I *know it shall be ill with them*; though they thrive, and prosper some months, and years, yet I know the reward of their hands shall be given them. In the adversity and afflicted estate of Gods people, say, with those will I cast in my lot, *for I know it shall be well with them.* Take heed that the Providence of God draw you not from the Promise.

Lastly, (will some say), *What is our duty with reference to Providence at such a time?* I will open this in four or five particulars, with which I will shut up my Discourse upon this Observation:

1. *Search, and see whether some miscarriages of thy own, hath not carried Providence out of thy sight, and turned it out of its right line.* I told you before that Providence is never out of its way: it is always moving upon Gods Errand, but it is often out of our sight, and our sins are the cause of that its motion. You know under what a multitude of Promises the *Jews* were, as the seed of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; as the *posterity of David*, &c. Promises for great measures of outward prosperity; notwithstanding which they were carried captives into *Babylon*, and there endured an hard bondage of seventy years. *Isaiah* tells them the Reason, *Your iniquities have separated betwixt God and you: and your sins have made him to hide his face from you.* What do the godly amongst the *Jews* under this Dispensa-

tion? *Lam.* 3. 39, 40, *Let us* (say they) *search and try our ways, and return again to the Lord:* this is undoubtedly the duty of the Church, the duty of every particular Soul. When thou seest God turned out of his way, as thou thinkest, and not doing by thee as thou didst expect, search and see, whether thy miscarriages have not caused that withdrawing, or turning aside. It is true, Gods punishments of his people are not always for sin: he may sometimes do it to try their faith, their patience, their adherence to him; but this is a secret to us.

Two things are certain in this case: 1. *That God doth most ordinarily punish them for their sins.* 2. *That he never punisheth them, but they have sin'd enough to warrant it an act of justice,* and to give them cause of suspicion, and of Soul-humiliation: so as a searching and trying of their ways in the day of divine chastenings, can never be improper, or out of season.

2. *Look to your faith in the Promise.* It is the Promise is the object of Faith, and Providence no further than it relateth to the Promise. A time of dark Providences is usually a time of great temptations: It is so oftentimes on Gods part, that is, God designs his peoples trial. It is so often from *Satan*, who takes the advantage of those hours to suggest to the Soul. It is so as to the World; they pierced *Davids* heart in such an hour as *with a sword*, when in it they said unto him, *Where is thy God become?* Psalm 42. It is so in it self, considering that we are but flesh, and how ready the language of that is, *Surely I have cleansed my hands in vain, I have washed mine hands in innocency for nothing:* Or that of *Saul, This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait for him any longer?* Therefore, I say, Look to your Anchor-hold in such a day. Thus doth *David, Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? why art thou disquieted within me? trust thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God,* Psalm 42. So doth the Church, *Micah* 7. 8, *Rejoyce not over me, O mine Enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.* The Heathen Poets have a story, that *Ulysses* in his sailing home, *being to pass the Syrens*, who were wont to allure Mariners with their melodious tunes towards them, while their ships were dashed in pieces upon Rocks, to avoid the temptation, caused himself to be tied to the Mast of his Ship.

I would have every Christians heart tied to the Promise as to his Mast, that he might be out of the danger of all temptations from Providence.

Thirdly, (which indeed is a consequent of this), *Resolve to wait upon God under all the hidings of his face.* I call'd this a consequent of the other: for *he that believeth, maketh not haste* (saith the Prophet). This was the Churches resolution, *Isa.* 8. 17, *I will wait upon him, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob.* Temptations in an evil day can have no advantage, but upon our Souls precipitancy. The Soul that is resolved to wait upon God, hath much defeated all Tempters, and is out of all their Gunshot. I remember the speech of the three Children to the King of *Babylon, We are not* (say they) *careful to answer thee in this matter, The God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of thy hand: however, we will not fall down before the image which thou hast set up.* If he will not presently deliver us, we are resolved to wait on him.

Fourthly, To waiting, must be added *Prayer: I will look unto him, for he will hear me.* Prayer is the Catholick remedy, both for the aversion of any Judgments, and for the obtaining of any mercy.

Fifthly, To all this add but that of the *Psalmist*, Psalm 37. 34, *Wait upon the Lord, and keep his way*, and thou shalt inherit the promise made to it; *He shall exalt thee to inherit the land: and when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.* But I shall proceed no further in this Discourse.

SERMON XVI.

Psal. CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

HAVING shewed you it to be the duty of Gods people to observe the motions of Divine Providence (which are the things spoken of in this Text) and shewed you what a great indication of spiritual Wisdom such an observation is, and how great a mean, to make us to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord; I came in my last Exercise to commend unto you some remarkable Observations concerning them. I finished my Discourse at that time upon my first Observation, without any further preface I shall now proceed to a second, which you may take thus:

Observ. 2. *The Providence of God, in the fulfilling of the words, both of promise, and of threatning, doth ordinarily fulfil the first, when the people of God are at the lowest: and the latter, when his Enemies are at the highest.* I shall handle this in the same method as I did the other, speaking to it shortly, 1. *By way of Explication.* 2. *Confirming the Observation, and giving you the reasons of it:* and lastly, making *some Application of it.* For Explication,

1. I must desire you still to observe what I before told you, and now repeat, That the Providence of God in all its motions is but a Servant of the Word, it *fulfilleth the will of God:* That it is the spring from which all its motions do proceed, both the *secret*, and *revealed will.* The will of God is but one; but part of

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it *is revealed*, part *concealed*. So much of it as is neceſſary, in order to our Salvation, is revealed, whether reſpecting our rule of life; or reſpecting what ſhall happen to us, or others, to Nations, and Kingdoms, and Churches in this life; or to particular Souls in, or after this life. Now what God hath thus revealed, Providence brings to iſſue; and here is the ground both of our *prayers*, and *praiſes*.

2. For the *Promiſes*: I ſay, you ſhall obſerve, *It is the ordinary method of Divine Providence, to bring them to an accompliſhment, upon the Church and people of God, when they are at the loweſt in all humane appearance*; in the loweſt ſtate of dejection, in the loweſt degree of affliction; when they are loweſt as to their outward ſtate, loweſt as to their hopes.

3. I added thirdly, That it ordinarily gives a *being*, and fulfilling to the *threatning*, *when Gods Enemies are at the higheſt*. The people of God are thoſe to whom the promiſes are made: they are the *heirs of them*; they are thoſe to whom are given the *great* and *precious promiſes*: wicked men are they, to whom *the threatnings* belong; they are the children of wrath, the heirs of the Curſes: the work of Providence in reference to them (thoſe of them that will not be reformed) is to bring all the Curſes, that are written in the book of God, upon them. But I ſay you ſhall obſerve, That the time in which the Providence of God fulfilleth theſe words of Threatning upon them, is when they are *at the higheſt*; in the higheſt hopes of the contrary, on the higheſt mountains of proſperity.

Let me endeavour to juſtifie this Obſervation by ſome inſtances, and thoſe concerning bodies of people, or individuals. You know the people of the *Jews* were the only people under Heaven until Chriſts aſcenſion, that God owned as his people: Individuals there were that were not *Jews*, as *Job* and others; but (I ſay) for a body of people there were no other. *Gal.* 3. 16, To *Abraham*, and *his ſeed were the Promiſes made*, Rom. 9. 4, *Who are Iſraelites: to whom appertained the adoption, and the glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the ſervice of God, and the Promiſes.* The Promiſes made to *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, *Jacob*. *David*, &c. The Promiſes of *inheriting Canaan*, coming out of *Babylon*, *deſtroying their Enemies*, &c. Now theſe promiſes being given out, it was the work of Divine Providence to give them a *verification*, and to fulfil them. Obſerve what times the Provi-

dence of God doth it in: It bringeth the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and into *Canaan*, not while *Jacob*, or *Joseph* were alive. *Joseph* was a great man, and could have given a probable conduct to that great work. The *Israelites* while he lived were in a very flourishing condition, multiplying exceedingly, and being in a very prosperous state every way. But this is not a time when the Providence of God will accomplish the Promise; *Joseph* must die, and another King rise up that knew not *Joseph*. The children of *Israel* are diminished, their little ones slain, their whole body oppressed with hard labour, and brought to as low a pass as you can well imagine a people to be not wholly blotted out. This is the time that *Providence* will accomplish the promise for their coming out of *Egypt*. They pass the Red-sea in a very formidable body, like enough to make their way through the Wilderness, and a variety of Enemies into the promised Land. But before the Providence of God brings them in, they must be broken, in a great measure destroyed; all dead unless *Caleb*, and *Joshuah*, who came out of *Egypt*, and their body wholly a new generation; then they shall pass over *Jordan*. Read over all the story of *Judges*, and observe; God seldom delivered them from their oppressors, until they were brought as low as could be. After that time, when the men of *Jabish Gilead* were ready to take the basest terms, then God sends *Saul* to their rescue; when there was not *a sword*, nor *a spear found in all Israel*, but in the hand of *Saul* and *Jonathan*, then will God deliver them from the *Philistines*. They shall be delivered out of the *captivity* of *Babylon*, but not till they had been worn out there seventy years: when one would have thought scarce any should have been left to have returned, and those that were so linked with alliances to the *Babilonians*, so fixed in another Country, as few of them should ever have been perswaded to have come out, and have gone to build a-new a desolate City. The promise of Christ (their great King) shall be made good to them: but when? *when the Scepter is departed from Judah, and the Law-giver from his feet*. When the *Jews* are made tributaries to the *Romans*; for particular persons the cases are very many: *Abraham* shall have the Child of the promise, when he is an hundred years old. *Joseph* shall be exalted *out of a dungeon*. *Isaac* shall be rescued, when the knife is at his throat. *David* shall have the Kingdom, when he is brought to the lowest Ebb; and that is the time when *Job* shall

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be restored to a prosperous state, and his latter end shall be greater than his beginning. The three Children, and *Daniel* shall be delivered and exalted, but not till the former be actually thrown into the fiery Furnace, and *Daniel* into the Lions Den. *Peter* shall be delivered out of prison, but not till the very night before his execution was designed. *Paul* shall be delivered when he despaired of life, and had the sentence of death in himself, 2 *Cor.* 1. 9. In short, you shall observe this the constant course and method of Divine Providence.

Secondly, The observation is as true on the other hand: when *Pharaoh* with his Host was in their highest ruff; and he says, *I will pursue, I will overtake them, I will satisfie my lust on them*, then shall he be drowned in the Red-sea; when the *sins* of the *Amorites are at the full*, then, and not before, will Providence destroy and root them out. When *Sisera* is in his greatest heighth, then will God by Woman bring him down. When *Sennacherib* is at his heighth, then shall he perish. The like instances might be given of *Belshazzar*, *Haman*; in short, of all the Enemies of God, and his people, of whom we have any Scriptural record. I remember when *Gideon* had his great Army: God said, they were too many for him to conquer by, and reduceth them to three hundred, then maketh them victorious. The people of God, though under some misery, and oppressions may be too many, or in too good a condition for him to deliver them, and the Enemies may be too low, or in too pitiful a condition for the Lord of Hosts to encounter them. He will then deal with *Pharaoh*, *Sennacherib*, *Haman*, *Belshazzar*, *Herod*, when they are at the highest, and think themselves out of the reach of divine Power and Justice. When all the World almost is turned *Arian* he will begin to root out *Arianism*: When all are made slaves to the *Pope*, and he can with his *Bulls* fright the greatest *Prince*; that is the time Providence will chuse to begin Reformation. Let us a little enquire into the Wisdom of God in this method of working.

God in all his great workings, both of Judgment and Mercy, in all his great motions of Providence, is pursuing one and the same great end, *viz.* the glory of his great and holy Name; he can work for no higher, he will work for no lower, or lesser end: The deliverance and good of his people is subordinate to this, so is the ruin and destruction of their Enemies; so that this must be the reason of this method of Providence, *Because*, thus *God*

is most glorified, by delivering his people when they are at the lowest; by destroying his Enemies when they are at the highest, God is most glorified. My further Work must be to demonstrate this, *God is thus most glorified:*

1. *By a Declaration of himself in his glorious Attributes.*
2. *By Eliciting pious actions from his Creatures.*

1. By a *Declaration of himself:* that men may know that he is God, and he alone; and the work is his, and his alone. There is, as I have told you, a mute Glory, which ariseth unto God from his own works: as the *Psalmist* saith, *The heavens declare the glory of God.* As all Gods works of Creation, so all his works of Providence, declare the glory of God; and he doth them to be had in remembrance, that he might by them be glorified, and get himself a great Name in the Earth. God is divers ways eminently magnified, and made known to the World by this method of Providence in its workings: divers Attributes of his are remarkably by it published to the World. I will instance in some: His *power*, his *wisdom*, his *justice and righteousness*, and his *goodness*, and *mercy*.

1. *The power of God is thus more magnified.* Power is a great Attribute of God: *Once have I spoken* (saith the *Psalmist*), *yea twice have I heard it, that power belongeth unto God.* Hence he is so often call'd *The great God.* Now the *power* of God, is never so eminent in the view of the World, as when he *raiseth up his people out of the dunghil*, and pulleth down the Sinners in the heighth and pride of their glory. When God falleth upon a *Nebuchadnezzar*, crying out, *Who is that God who shall deliver you out of my hands?* Dan. 3.15. Upon a *Sennacharib*, saying, *Who are they amongst the gods of the Nations that have delivered their people out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver you out of my hand?* Isa. 36.20. Upon a *Pharaoh*, saying, *Who is the Lord that I should obey him?* Exod. 5. 2. Then doth the Lord make the greatness of his might and power known: God lets them then see, that wherein they thought, spake, and acted proudly, he can be above them. Power is never so magnified, as when an opposite power is greatest, when men most think they are out of Gunshot. I remember the story of *Gideon* (which I hinted before); you have it, *Judg.* 7. 2. *The people* (saith God) *are too many for me,*

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leſt Iſrael vaunt himſelf againſt me, and ſay, my own hand hath ſaved me. Ver. 3, They were reduced to twenty two thouſand: *Ver.* 4, God ſaith, *They are yet too many for me.* In ſhort, they muſt be brought to three hundred, and by them God will work; here now Gods Arm *was made bare:* when there is a plenty of *means*, and *probabilities*, and God worketh by and in the uſe of them, it is ſtill God's arm that brings Salvation; but it is as it were a *cloathed-arm*, and the arm, the power, and ſtrength of God is hidden and concealed: but when God works contrary to humane probabilities, and without ſuch means, there the arm of the Lord is made bare. The *Egyptians*, the *Philiſtines*, the vileſt Enemies cry out; God fighteth againſt them, or, *This is the Lords work.*

Secondly, As the *Power*, ſo the *Wiſdom of God* is ſeen in *theſe methods and operations of Providence.* Indeed, ſometimes God ſo worketh, that the *Power* of God appeareth uppermoſt, and is moſt conſpicuous in the deſtruction of the Enemies, and in the ſalvation of the Lords people: as in the caſe of *Sennacherib's* Army, deſtroyed by an Angel; of *Pharaoh*, deſtroyed by the return of the waters, *&c.* But oft-times there's a *wonderful wiſdom* of God in *ordering contingencies*, and ſeeming caſual things, to his own ends in theſe caſes: as in the caſe of *Joſeph* and *Haman*, the reflexion of the Sun upon the waters, which cauſed the *Moabites* miſtake and confuſion. But the wiſdom of God is further ſeen in this, That a mercy ſeldom comes; but though we could ſee nothing of Wiſdom relating to it before it came, yet when it is come to paſs, there's no underſtanding Chriſtian but is forced to ſay, It could never have come in a more ſeaſonable time: the wiſdom of which, we could ſee nothing of in the proſpect, is evident upon the event. It would have been a great queſtion, whether the *Iſraelites* would have been ſo willing to have come out of *Egypt* under the conduct of *Joſeph*, when they were pinch'd with no oppreſſions, as they were under *Moſes* and *Aaron*, when they had been ſerving in the Brick-kilns, and their lives ſo many years together had been made bitter to them, through the hard bondage which they had ſo long endured.

Thirdly, *The Lord doth thus more eminently magnifie his juſtice and righteouſneſs.* Juſtice lieth in the diſtribution of *rewards* and *puniſhments:* the firſt we call *Remunerative*; the ſecond *Vindicative Juſtice*: Both are much magnified by this method of Providence. Perſons in the greateſt heighths of proſperity, or *depths*

of adversity are ordinarily the most remarkable objects of the worlds eyes, and more regarded than those that are in a more middle-state. When God lifts up a *Joseph* out of the dungeon, and a *Daniel* out of the *Lions den*, and advanceth a *Mordecai*, for whom a *gallows* was set up, and the three Children are taken out of a fiery Furnace; He proclaimeth to all the World, and they are forced to confess it, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous:* and so on the other side, when a *Pharaoh*, a *Sennecharib*, an *Haman*, a *Nebuchadnezzar* are pull'd down in the midst of all their pride and jollity, from their very pinacles of honour; the Justice and Righteousness of God in punishing proud and imperious Sinners, is proclaimed, and made more evident to all the World. Lastly,

4. *The Lords goodness is thus more magnified and taken notice of.* Common and ordinary Dispensations of gracious Providence, are little remarked by us: what mercy do we receive every night, every day from God, yet how little notice do we take of it? how little is our heart affected with it? but now when we are brought to the pits-brink, to a very low estate, and then are pluck'd from it; when we are in a very low estate, and then delivered; Gods goodness is both more proclaimed to the World, and more conspicuous unto us. But this will in part fall in under the second head: for I told you, that God is glorified by this method of his Providence, not only as his glorious Attributes (divers of them) are by it more exalted; but also as the pious and religious Acts of his people, are more by this method of Providence elicited. I have often hinted to you, that God hath a twofold glory from his Creatures, and the works of his hands: The first is a *meer passive* glory; Thus *the heavens declare the glory of God*; the Heavens shew forth the greatness, glory, and power of God. The second is *Active*; wherein the creature doth some actions, from which a glory doth result unto God. Now by this Method of Providence, God is not only glorified in the first sense, as this kind of working speaketh more of his *Power, Wisdom, Justice, Goodness*, &c. but in the second also.

5. *Thus God sometimes forceth an acknowledgment of his Power, even from the worst of men. Julian* himself shall confess that Christ is too hard for him, throwing up his Dagger to Heaven, and crying, *Vicisti Galilæe.* The *Egyptians* shall cry out, *Exod.* 14. 25, *Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for the Israelites*

Iſraelites againſt the Egyptians. Nebuchadnezzar ſhall make a Decree, *Dan.* 3. 29, *That every Nation, People and Language, which ſpeak any thing againſt the God of Shadrach, Meſhach, and Abednego, ſhall be cut in pieces, and their houſes ſhall be made a dunghil, becauſe there is no other God that can deliver after this ſort.* Dan. 6. 25, *Darius ſhall write to all people; Nations and Languages that dwell upon the Earth,* and make a Decree, *That in every Dominion of his Kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and ſtedfaſt for ever, and his Kingdom that which ſhall not be deſtroyed, and his Dominion ſhall be even to the end: he delivereth, and he reſcueth, and he worketh ſigns and wonders in the Heavens, and in the Earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the Lions.* The King of *Babylon* that ſet up the Golden-image, and ſo rigorouſly commanded all ſhould bow down to it, or be thrown into the fiery Furnace, heated ſeven times hotter than ordinary, *Dan.* 3. 26, *ſhall bleſs the God of Shadrach, Meſhach, and Abednego, who hath ſent his Angel and delivered his ſervants that truſted in him; and have changed the Kings word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not ſerve or worſhip any god but their own God.* What a wonderful glory here had God given him from a wicked *Pagan Prince?* he confeſſeth his Command wicked; he bleſſeth God that put into theſe three hearts [illegible] to diſobey it, and make him change his word; he acknowledgeth God the true God, and that he delivereth them that truſt in him. All this accreweth from Gods delivering theſe three men when they were at the loweſt, when all gave them over for dead men.

But ſecondly, How much more glory hath God from his own people upon any ſuch deliverance? *Surprizals affect us moſt.* An unthought-of evil moſt ſtartleth and dejecteth us: An unthought-of good moſt elevates, and affects us. Good things leſſen in our opinion and eſtimate, by a long expectation; They are greateſt and moſt affect us, when we are paſt hopes of them. Sudden and unlook'd-for good, raiſeth our hearts to great admiration, great praiſe, and thankſgiving. Now, *he that offereth praiſe* (ſaith God) *glorifieth me.* The more God is admired, the more his goodneſs is predicated and proclaimed; the more men upon any occaſion ſpeak of his honour, and power, and greatneſs, the more glory God hath from them.

Thirdly, God is more honoured by this method of Providence,

not only as the ſuddenneſs of it doth more affect and elevate his peoples hearts; but alſo as by it his people are *more prepared for the receiving of mercy*. The *Pſalmiſt* ſaith, *He preparath the heart, and then cauſeth his ear to hear*: their *heart is prepared* by their *exerciſe of grace*; as of other grace, ſo eſpecially *faith and patience*; they become more low in their own eyes, they learn more to truſt and depend upon God, and to wait upon him in the way of his Judgments, as the Prophet ſpeaks. Now all exerciſe of grace bringeth glory to God, all of it is the fruit of his Spirit, it is obedience to his Will; it carrieth with it a recognition of the power, wiſdom, goodneſs and Soveraignty of God. The longer God deferreth a mercy, the more time his people have to ſearch and try their ways, to humble themſelves under the mighty hand of God, to exerciſe their faith, their patience, *&c.* the more he hath of his peoples prayers, *&c.*

Fourthly, I may yet add one thing more: he hath by this means, *the glory of his Juſtice, both from his own people, and from wicked men.* By ſuffering his own people to be brought very low, he proclaimeth to the World, that he will not ſuffer the beſt of them to go unpuniſhed; but as to them he will approve himſelf a *God of purer eyes than to behold any iniquity*: and by letting Sinners run on to the heighth, before he pulleth them down, their wickedneſs alſo becomes ſo exorbitant and conſpicuous to the World, that the neutral part of the World, ſhall both acknowledg the righteouſneſs of God, in bringing them down to an utter deſtruction, and delivering of his oppreſſed people out of their hands. But this is enough to have ſpoken in juſtification of the Obſervation, and giving you ſome reaſonable account of it.

Ps. 89. 30—33.

Uſe 1. This (in the firſt place) *may let us ſee, how little means is conſiderable in the great effects of Divine Providence.* Humane means are by us to be uſed when Providence affords them: but God ordinarily doth his works either without them, or when there is but little of them to uſe: *Not by might, nor by power; but by my Spirit* ſaith the Lord. *The ſtone was cut out of the mountain without hands, which ſmote the image on his feet: which were part of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces*, Dan. 2. 34: and indeed, if this Obſervation is true, if God ordinarily delivers his people when they are at the loweſt, and brings down his Enemies when they are at the higheſt, humane means muſt have but a little ſhare in

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Gods works: when men are at loweſt, there is leaſt viſible means to lift them up; and when God's Enemies are at higheſt, there is leaſt appearance of humane viſible means to pull them down. Now this, as you have heard, is the time when God ordinarily works, and therefore our eyes ſhould be off the arm of fleſh: What is a Mountain before Gods *Zorobabel?* How little of humane means did God uſe in bringing his people out of *Egypt* and *Babylon?* There is never greater improbability of any great work of Providence, than in the greateſt probability of humane means. *Gideon*'s twenty two thouſand were too many for God. Let us then learn how to look upon, how to uſe means: Look upon them as ſignifying nothing without Gods efficacy: uſe them as not truſting in them, or to them. Raiſe up no great hopes upon great probabilities in reſpect of them. The people of God are never more deceived, than in their judgments upon ſuch appearances. Many times the thing appears too probable to humane eyes, for God to ſuffer it at that time to come to iſſue; he ſhould have little honour, little glory from the effect; if he ſhould give it, men would ſay that God had ſaved them by their own bow, and ſword, and ſtaff. God will have it otherwiſe: *When he turneth again the captivity of Sion, his people ſhall be like them that dream*, Pſalm 126. 1. He will ſo deſtroy his Enemies, that they ſhall cry out, *Let us flee, for God fighteth for the Iſraelites againſt the Egyptians*, Exod. 14. 25. He will ſo bring to paſs all his great works, both of Judgment and mercy, that they ſhall ſing that Song, *Pſalm* 115. *v.* 1, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy Name be given the glory.*

Hence learn in the ſecond place, *That the Sinner can never be ſecure:* nay is then leaſt ſecure, when he judgeth himſelf moſt ſecure. Gods people value themſelves upon the Promiſes: but wicked men value themſelves upon Providences, and judg of their ſecurity from their proſperity, ſucceſſes and intereſts. They never crow, but when they have made their neſts in the Cedars, and fixed their habitations on ſome ſtrong Mountain, which they think ſhall never be moved. They are never leſs ſecure, they are never nearer to ruin than now: *For when they ſhall ſay peace and ſafety, then ſudden deſtruction cometh upon them, as upon a woman in travel, and they ſhall not eſcape*, 1 Theſ. 5. 3. When *Babylon was given to pleaſures, and dwelled careleſly, and ſaid, ſhe ſhould* *Uſe 2.*

be

be as a Lady for ever; she was, and there was none besides her: she should never sit as a widow, nor know the loss of children: then it was that God tells her, that both these things should come upon her in one day: both the loss of children, and widowhood, Isa. 47. 7. *Dan.* 4. 30 When *Nebuchadnezzar* was in his Ruff, walking in the Palace of the Kingdom of *Babylon*, and saying, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built? for the house of my Kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my Majesty.* Even then *while the word was in the Kings mouth* (saith the Text, *ver.* 31) *there fell a voyce from heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar! to thee be it spoken, the Kingdom is departed from thee.* A Sinner can be secure in no estate, at no time: If God hath lifted him up he hath reason to fear his ruin is near: If God be pulling him down, he hath reason to fear that he is sinking into Hell. God delights to grapple with a prospering, fortified, interested Sinner; and to let him then when he speaketh most proudly, know, that wherein he speaketh proudly, he will be above him. Let not therefore any Sinner trust to his prosperity.

Use 3. Thirdly, From hence we may learn much of our duty, both with reference to the *high, and prosperous estate of Gods Enemies; and with reference to God in the low and mean estate of his Church and people.* It is one of the great temptations which attend us in this life, to see the wicked prospering, and flourishing like a *green bay-tree.* It troubled the most eminent Servants of God we read of in Scripture, *Job, David, Jeremiah, Habbakuk:* We had need therefore learn our duty in such an hour. You will say, What is it? I *answer*, 1. *Not to envy them*, 2. *Not to fret, and repine against God*, 3. *Not to take part with them.*

1. Not to *envy them:* It is what the *Psalmist* calls to us for, *Psalm* 37. 1, ——*Neither be thou envious at the workers of iniquity:* And the Wiseman, *Prov.* 3. 31, *Envy not the Oppressor.* Prov. 23. 17, *Let not thy heart envy Sinners.* You have an usual saying, It is better to be envied, than pitied: the meaning is, to be in a state of prosperity, which usually is the Object of Envy, than in a *state of adversity*, which is usually the Object of pity: It is not so here, It is better to be a child of God, though an Object of pity, than a Sinner, though an Object of Envy. Prosperity slayeth the fool, nor is he ever so near ruin, as when he is at the highest. There is a story of a custom they had in *Persia*, to gratifie a condemned Malefactor, for an hour before his Execution, with whatsoever he

ſhould deſire; which of us ſhould have envied ſuch a poor wretch for that hours pleaſure? Sinners are never ſo near ruin as when they are at the higheſt: O then envy them not in their heighths!

2. Much leſs *fret, and repine againſt God, for allowing them ſuch a preheminence over thee, as to their outward eſtate.* God hath his wiſe and juſt ends in it, both in ſuffering them to grow high, and thee to continue in a low and afflicted ſtate; by the former, he ripeneth them for Judgment: by the latter, he prepareth you for Mercy. *Fret not becauſe of evil-doers* (ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſalm 37. *ver.* 1.) We cannot dive into the bottom of Gods Counſels; but if this obſervation of the motions of Providence be true, we may ſee cauſe enough, not to fret our ſelves, nor to murmur and repine at God; we have no reaſon to repine at God, when we ſee his Providence working towards our deliverance, and towards the downfal of his and our Enemies. Thus it is according to this Obſervation; when we are brought moſt low, and the Enemies of God are ſuffered to mount moſt high.

3. *Certainly* (if this be true) *the flouriſhing ſtate of ſinners ſhould be no temptation to us, ſo much as to deſire to take part with them. Solomon* joins them together, *Prov.* 3. 31, *Envy not thou the Oppreſſor, neither chuſe any of his ways: My ſon* (ſaith *Solomon*) *If ſinners entice thee, conſent not thou unto them; though they ſay, we ſhall find all precious ſubſtance, we ſhall fill our houſes with ſpoil.* The words of Sinners are nothing ſo enticing, as their proſperous ſtate; for riches, and honour, and rule, and pleaſures, not many can reſiſt the temptation of them: but certainly, if the heighths of theſe to ſinners be prognoſticks of their ruin; if we could conſider their pride, their riches, honours, plenty, dominion, as things which ſet them nearer unto ruin, they would be no temptations: deſire not to riſe, and thrive and grow great, and domineer with wicked men, leſt thou alſo fall with them.

2. But in the laſt place, let us from hence conclude the duty of a child of God *in his loweſt ſtate*, or in the *loweſt ſtate of the Church and people of God.* I will open it in few particulars, and ſo conclude.

Firſt, To glory *in Tribulation.* The Apoſtle maketh this one of the fruits of *juſtifying faith*, Rom. 5. St. *James* would have the rich Chriſtian *rejoyce in that he is made low*, Ja. 1. 10. A depth

of

of misery in the people of God, always makes way for mercy; and the redemption, and salvation of the people of God is never nearer, than when in humane appearance it seems to be furthest off. Indeed, this must be the rejoycing of faith, for the eye of sense at such a time is quite put out. Besides the circulation of Divine Providence, which is evident to those who look wistly upon the motions of Providence in the World; there is a great deal more to give the people of God at such a time cause of rejoycing: they are more prepared for mercy, their Enemies are more prepared for vengeance; it is then a fit season for God to work for his glory, *&c.*

Secondly, *This should learn the people of God patience under all their sufferings, pressures, and oppressions.* Patience is a grace, of which we may say as *Solomon* of a Friend, or a Brother: *It is made for adversity.* There are many arguments to perswade Patience, that is, a quiet, calm submission to God under frowns of Providence; but nothing more effectual to our hasty and impatient frail natures, than to hear, that the burthen of God upon our shoulders shall not lie there long: when we can hope that *Nubecula est & transibit*, it is but a storm, and it will over. What said our Saviour to his Disciples, *Could not you watch with me one hour?* The prospect of the shortness of an Evil, doth very much alleviate it, and relieve our spirits under the burthen of it. That miserable Emperour had no other relief under his most cruel torments, than *Hoc non est Eternitas*; this is not Eternity. Now what an argument is this for a Christians patience, and fortitude, for him to think when his case is worst, when his burthen most pincheth him, then his deliverance is neareft, even at the door. They say in a dark morning, the darkness is always thickest just before break of day. *In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* I am sure it is always darkest just before break of day with the Church and the people of God. As the pains of a Woman in travel encrease, so the hour of her delivery more hasteneth; and there is no worse sign of a long travail to her, than little and lingring pains. The Women at such a time will sometimes say to those that enquire after the Woman in pangs, *We want more pain.* Truly it is so oft-times with the Church of God: They want more pain, more pressures and oppressions, they are not brought low enough for a mercy. O let us be patient then under the greatest trials: Great trials never last long. You know what the

Martyr

Martyr said, *We have a bad Dinner*, but *we shall have a better Break-fast.*

Thirdly, *This calleth aloud to the people of God at such a time for the exercise of faith.* Indeed, this is the proper time for *faith to work.* As too much light blinds the Eye instead of helping it, so doth sense blind the Eye of Faith: Sense followeth Providence; but Faith stands by the Promise, and exerciseth it self upon that. When the Providence of God is most out of our sight, then is the time to lay the fastest hold upon the Promise. As there are degrees of darkness in nights, some are much more dark than others; so there are degrees of darkness in the Churches nights: sometimes there is a darkness in it which may be felt, when Providence is so far from giving a light to us like that of the Sun, that it doth not give us the light of a Candle. Here now Christians stand concerned to shew, that they do not live by the light of Providence, but by *faith in the word of God*; which still is the same, and abideth for ever. If two be walking together, they had never more need to take heed that they lose not one anothers company, than in a dark and blustring night, when the darkness keeps them that they cannot see one another: and the wind hindereth that they cannot hear the sound each of others feet. The Believer and the Promise are Relates, companions each to other: there is never more danger of their being parted each from other, than in a night of dark and blustring Providence. Now a Christian stands concerned, to be often applying his Soul to the Promise: often calling upon his Soul as *David*, in *Psalm* 42, *Trust thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.* Nor is there any thing more conducive to make a Christian at such a time hang upon the Promise, than to hear that it is the usual method of Divine Providence; then to remember Gods people, when they are in the lowest condition.

Fourthly, *As this calleth to the people of God for faith in the Promise*, so it calls to them for *hope*: Faith and Hope are so near of kin, that they are oft put one for another. Indeed, *Hope* is nothing else but Faith *looking out at the windows of the soul*, in expectation of the coming of the thing believed. There is an *hope* that worketh upon the encouragements of sense, when the mercy hoped for is seen coming in a way of probable means: but there is an Hope that proceedeth meerly upon the Evidence of Faith, when the Soul hopeth for some good thing, but seeth no

encouragement from any ſenſible thing: the former is but a natural affection working upon an *abſent probable good*; This latter is a *ſupernatural habit*, and an exerciſe of grace. The Apoſtle calls it an *hoping againſt hope*; or a believing in *hope againſt hope*. This is that which I am calling to you for: This is that which keepeth the heart alive in the deadeſt time. We uſe to ſay, *If it were not for hope* (under evils) *the heart would break*. Faith is the acquieſcence of the Soul in the Word: *Hope* is the motion of the Soul conſequent to this acquieſcence. Faith ſaith, the thing is ſure; Hope ſeeth it coming, and relieveth the Soul with that. Hope is the Souls watchman. The Soul cryes out, *Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?* Hope ſaith, *The morning is coming*. Now this Obſervation advantageth Hope; It aſſures you, that God is coming at *Midnight*. *When you ſee theſe things come to paſs* (ſaith our Saviour, *Luke* 21. 28.) *lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh*. It hath reference to all that went before, where our Saviour had been telling them of the great Evils that were to precede his coming. Now, ſaith our Saviour, when you ſee things at this miſerable, deſpicable paſs; *then lift up your heads*.

Fifthly, This Notion calleth to the people of God for *fervent, and conſtant prayer* for the Church, and people of God, when they are at the loweſt ebb. Never give over the caſe of the Church and people of God for deſperate, it is never leſs ſo than when it moſt appeareth to you to be ſo. I remember it is particularly remarked concerning *Daniel*, in the 9*th* Chapter of his Propheſie, That *when he underſtood by books that the time was come for the fulfilling of the Jewiſh captivity, then* he made that *excellent Prayer*, which you have upon record in that *Chapter*, with a great deal of *fervor* and *zeal* for the people, of which you will find it full. *Daniels* certain knowledg, that that was the time for their deliverance, did not ſuperſede his duty of Prayer, but more abundantly quicken him to it. In ſuch a ſtate of the Church and people of God, as I have been deſcribing to you, a Chriſtian hath two great arguments to perſwade him to a more conſtant, diligent, and fervent application of himſelf to the throne of Grace. 1. The *Churches miſery and low condition*, calling to him for pity, and what help he can give it. 2. *The knowledg he hath, or may have, that it is now about the time, when God uſeth to ariſe and help*.

Laſtly, This Obſervation calleth upon all that fear the Lord,

Lord, eſpecially at ſuch a time *when they, or the Church of God is loweſt, to watch unto holineſs; to wait upon the Lord and keep his way, and to be wary of ſin.* To deter all that fear God from ſinning, eſpecially at ſuch a time, I might mind you of that precept of God to the *Jews: When the Hoſt goeth forth to battel, then take heed of every wicked thing.* But I ſhall conclude with that known ſtory of the *Iſraelites:* You know they had an old Promiſe made four hundred years before, that *they ſhould inherit the land of Canaan:* they had ſerved in *Egypt* many years, they were now come over the *Red-ſea*, and had encountred, and overcome the long and many difficulties of the Wilderneſs: they were brought within a proſpect of the promiſed Land, nothing wanted, but a taking poſſeſſion: they murmur againſt God, retard their entrance forty years, until all that generation was deſtroyed, except *Caleb* and *Joſhuah*. I ſhall conclude, Hath the Church been a long time under great preſſures, things ſtill as to its intereſt growing worſe and worſe, that they ſeem to be brought to as low a paſs as they can be? Now begins her hope to dawn, according to that Method of Providence which I have obſerved to you: Only now, let the people of God look to themſelves, that by ſome defection they do not ſet back their own mercies. You may take the Exhortation in the words of the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 10. 6, *Now theſe things happened unto them for our enſamples, to the end that we ſhould not luſt after evil things, as they luſted: neither be ye Idolaters as were ſome of them*, &c.

But I ſhall add no more to this Second Obſervation.

SERMON XVII.

Pſal. CVII. 43.

Whoſo is wiſe and will obſerve theſe things, even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

I Have both ſhewed you the duty of the people of God, to make Obſervations upon the motions of *Divine Providence*; and the advantage accrewing to them that perform it. 1. It is an indication of ſpiritual Wiſdom. 2. *Thoſe* that do it *ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.* My work at preſent is to give you ſome obſervations upon the motions of *Actual Providence*, which is the work of God in the World, *fulfilling his purpoſe*; and fulfilling his Word, both of Promiſe, and of Threatning. Two of thoſe Obſervations I have given you, diſcourſed upon them, and made ſome ſutable Applications. I proceed to a third.

3*d* Obſerv. *Providence ordinarily doth its greateſt works, in the day of mans ſmalleſt things.*

It is truly obſerved, that the greatneſs of Divine Power and Wiſdom is moſt ſeen in the Creation, and Preſervation of the leaſt creatures. As a Workman is moſt magnified, that can bring moſt art into the leaſt room: and it is as true, that the greatneſs of Divine Providence, delighteth to ſhew it ſelf in the day of mans ſmalleſt things. This Obſervation hath ſome cognation with the former: but there is more in it, as you will ſee by the Sequel of my Diſcourſe. Mans *ſmalleſt things* may be underſtood to ſignifie, 1. *Smalleſt means.* 2. *Smalleſt hopes.* 3. *Smalleſt works or actions.*

1. *Smalleſt*

1. *Smalleſt means:* Though God be not tied to humane means, but ſometimes he worketh without them: Though *they have no efficacy*, but what they derive from him, and he commandeth them to exert and put forth; yet he often *maketh uſe of means.* But this you ſhall obſerve, and it ſhall be juſtified to you by and by, that God ſeldom doth great things by great means: but when God doth great work, though he make uſe of means, yet it is but little ſmall means: and the day of ſmalleſt means, is uſually the day of Gods work.

2. In the day of *ſmalleſt hopes:* and indeed this almoſt naturally followeth upon the other; for humane hopes do uſually ebb, or flow according to the proportion of humane means that are in our Eye: ſo that if God doth his greateſt works in the day of *ſmalleſt means*, he doth them likewiſe in the day of our ſmalleſt *hopes*; which riſe higher, or fall lower (uſually) according to the proſpect which we have of probable means.

3. Laſtly, In the day of *ſmalleſt works or actions:* when man is moſt buſie, God ſeems to be moſt idle, moſt aſleep when we ſeem to be moſt awake. *When God turns again the captivity of Sion, they are as thoſe that dream:* they never ſee ſo much the Salvation of God, as when they *ſtand ſtill.* I do not ſay, when men will do leaſt; but when they do, when they can do leaſt, then uſually God doth his greateſt works of Providence.

I ſhall juſtifie this Obſervation by a great variety of inſtances:

Let the firſt be that great work of Providence, *in bringing the children of Iſrael out of Egypt.* It is true, they were no inconſiderable body, or number of people: they were at their coming out *ſix hundred thouſand ſouls*, but ſcattered over all the Land of *Egypt*, a ſmall number in compariſon of the *Egyptians:* diminiſhed by all arts, by many years hard labour, in no Military order, nothing of the power of the Lord was in their hand: they were ſo very ſlaves, that they murmured againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*, for but going in to *Pharaoh* to ask for a deliverance for them: means of deliverance for them there appeared none to an humane Eye. Indeed, being ſo great a body of people, God might have made uſe of their Swords to have fought their way out of *Egypt:* he could eaſily have commanded them into a Military rank and file, but he uſeth none of them; only ſendeth *Moſes* and *Aaron* upon his Errand, to command *Pharaoh to let his people go, that they might ſerve him.* The ſame might be ſaid

of

of their deliverance out of the captivity of *Babylon*: there was no means, they had no hopes from any appearance of humane probabilities, (those that believed amongst them doubtless had an hope from the Promise); there was none of them stirred that we read of. *Cyrus* proclaims their liberty. The walls of the *strong City of Jericho* fall down before the *Israelites*, upon the *blowing of Rams-horns*, and the peoples compassing it at a distance about seven days, *Josh.*6. *Canaan* is given into the hands of the *Israelites*: they were indeed a considerable Army, but the *seven Nations*, through which they made their way into that possession, were more strong and mighty than they, as *Moses* tells them, *Deut.*7. *Gideon* delivereth them, oppressed by the *Midianites*, with a party (rather than an Army) of three hundred men. *Sampson* with the *jaw-bone of an ass* slayeth a thousand *Philistines*. *David* with a sling and a stone, shall kill *Goliah*, when none durst encounter him; and the hearts of the people were killed with his daily defiance of them. Indeed, God hath seldom done any great things in the World by great means: when the *Philistines* came out in an Army of thirty thousand, of which we read in 1 *Sam.* 13, and but of three thousand *Israelites* that could be got together: and they also frighted, so as *ver.* 6, *They hid themselves in caves, thickets, rocks, and in high-places, and in pits*: those that kept together (except *Saul and Jonathan*) *had neither sword, nor spear amongst them*, ver. 19, 20. *Jonathan and his Armour-bearer* go up alone and smite them: set all the Host on trembling, and the multitude melteth away, *chap.* 14. *v.* 16. *The colour* of the Water deceives the *Moabites* to their ruin, when *Jehoram*, *Jehosaphat*, and the *King of Edom* were almost all famined for want of water, 2 *Kings* 3. 20, 21. When *Jehosaphat knows not what to do*, 2 Chron. 26. 22, God tells them, *ver.* 17, *They need not fight, only stand still and see the salvation of God*: they did but stand still, and sing, and praise; their Enemies destroy one another: Look upon Gods great work of Providence, in the conversion of the World to the *obedience of the Gospel*; How doth God do this? Not *by might*, nor *by power*, but by *his Spirit*. Christ sends out a few poor Fishermen: these shall go and perswade the world to throw out their Idols, and to receive the new Doctrine of the Gospel, which to their wisdom appeared foolishness. The World was full of very learned Philosophers: God could have converted, instructed, and sent out them, but he chuseth to do this great

work

work by ſmall things: *Chuſing* (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 *Cor.* 1. 27, 28.) *the fooliſh things of the world, to confound the wiſe: the weak things of the world, to confound thoſe that were mighty: the baſe things of the world, and things which are deſpiſed, to bring to nought the things that are.* Next to this was the great Work of God in the *Reformation*, begun in *Germany* by *Luther*; it was a day of very *ſmall things*, the whole world was *Popiſh*, and had given their power to the *Roman beaſt*: the remainders of the Church were in the *valleys of Piedmont* and *Lucerne*, and in *Bohemia*, a ſmall deſpiſed remnant. Now God begins to work, and by what means? *Luther*, a poor deſpiſed *Fryer*, he begins and preacheth againſt indulgences: the whole world almoſt were againſt him, he hath to do with, the *Emperour*, the *Pope*, all the *Popiſh Doctors*; yet by theſe ſmall things the Providence of God brings to paſs this his great work. It was a day of *ſmall things with us*, when we were delivered from the *Spaniſh-Armado* in the year 1588, from the intended *Powder-Treaſon*. In ſhort, I ſay we ſhall find, that the Providence of God hath done the greateſt works, that it hath brought to paſs in the world, in the day of mans ſmalleſt things; when there have been the ſmalleſt appearances of humane means, when the People of God have had the ſmalleſt hopes, and when they have been leaſt in action. God hath in his Providence ſeldom done any great things by great humane means.

Now the reaſon of this is the ſame, as of my former obſervation, *Becauſe thus he gets himſelf moſt glory*. The Glory of God is the great end of all his actions, he worketh for himſelf, for the Honour and Glory of his own great Name. Now God hath more Honour and Glory by theſe accompliſhments, than if he ſhould bring them to paſs by greater and more probable means. The Apoſtle gives this very reaſon, 1 *Cor.* 1. 29. *Why God choſe weak things to confound thoſe that are mighty*, &c. *That no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence.*

1. *His power is thus more magnified:* He thus appears to be a great God, a mighty God, though it be true, that the Power of God is equally exerted, when he worketh by great means, as by ſmall: (had we ſpiritual eyes, or did we look upon means as we ought to do, as deriving all their efficacy from God), yet *de facto*, it is not ſo to us; and therefore you ſhall in Scripture obſerve God often declaring, that he would work this, or

that in this, or that manner, that his People might not ſay, that they had done this by their own might or power. The leſſer appearance there is of ſecond Cauſes, the more the efficiency of the firſt Cauſe is evident; ſo God getteth himſelf a great deal of Glory, by working in the day of mans ſmalleſt things.

2. (As I alſo told you under the former head) God getteth himſelf more Glory by *the praiſes of his people:* he is more admired in his workings, more praiſed and adored for his workings. The Enemies are alſo hereby enforced to confeſs the works of the Lord, and to acknowledg the greatneſs of his Power. But having enlarged upon theſe things under the former obſervation, I ſhall add no more here, but come to the Application.

Uſe 1. The firſt Uſe I ſhall make of this point, ſhall be what the Prophet *Zechariah* hath made before me, *Zech.* 4. 10. *Who hath deſpiſed the day of ſmall things?* The Prophet propoundeth it by way of Interrogation, but it contains a Precept in the bowels of it: Learn not to deſpiſe the *day of ſmall things*; it is uſually Gods day. It may be a day of *ſmall things as to the Church*, the ſtate of it may be very ſad, the caſe of it very low; little humane means or probabilities may appear of the amendment of its ſtate; all things may ſeem to make againſt the intereſt of God and Religion. Now I ſay, let no man *deſpiſe this day of ſmall things:* It may be a day of ſmall things with the particular ſoul, the caſe of it may be very ſad, it may be full of dejections, full of deſpondencies, hurried with temptations; it may have hope, and but a little hope, light ſhining in upon it at a poor crevice: let none now deſpiſe this day of *ſmall things.* Two things I would preſs upon you. 1. *Not to deſpiſe this day.* 2. *To perform what is your poſitive duty with reference to ſuch a day.*

1. I ſay firſt, *Deſpiſe not ſuch a day.* Perſons or things may be deſpiſed two ways: 1. *Directly.* 2. *Interpretatively.* Take heed of deſpiſing it *directly.* Take heed of deſpiſing it *interpretatively.* We deſpiſe a perſon or thing *directly*, when in our hearts we contemn him or it, and have a low and poor eſtimate of him or it, and expreſs it by any outward ſign, as *words, geſtures*, &c. Thus the Enemies of the *Jews* ſcorned the *Jews*, employed in re-building the City and Temple; when they ſaid, *What will theſe feeble Jews do? if a fox go up, he will break down*

what

what they have builded. It was (it ſeems) a *day of ſmall things* with the *Jews*, their Enemies deſpiſed them, and mocked at them. Thus *Sennacherib* deſpiſed *Hezekiah*, when he offered his Commiſſioners two hundred horſes, *if his maſter could ſet riders on t hem:* Take heed of this deſpiſing. Thus the Popiſh party in *Germany* deſpiſed the day of *ſmall things* in the beginning of the Reformation by *Luther*; when they bid him *go into his Cell, and pray, Lord have mercy upon me.* The iſſue in all three caſes ſhewed, that they had no reaſon, as to any of them, to have deſpiſed the day of ſmall things: Providence uſually brings forth its greateſt works in ſuch a day. But beſides this deſpiſing,

2. There is an *interpretative deſpiſing* of ſuch a day. Take heed of this alſo: thus we may deſpiſe things,

1. *When we do not give that due regard to them which we ought.* Thus our Saviour telleth you, *A man cannot ſerve two maſters, but he will cleave to the one, and deſpiſe the other*; that is, not give that due regard which he ought to give to the other. He that neglecteth what ought not to be neglected, doth interpretatively deſpiſe; when we have not that due value for a thing we ought to have, we deſpiſe it. *Thus Eſau deſpiſed his birth-right,* (ſaith the Apoſtle): we no-where read that he ſpake contemptuouſly of it; but he did not duly value it, he ſold it for a contemptible price, a meſs of pottage.

2. When becauſe of the *ſmallneſs of means, our hearts fail in the uſe of the means we have*; or, *as to the promiſe:* this is a deſpiſing of the day of ſmall things. Now I ſay, take heed of deſpiſing ſuch a day any of theſe ways; it is uſually *Gods day.* Let your rule be this:

If a work, or iſſue of a work, be for Gods Glory; if it be the matter of a Divine Promiſe, though there may be but a ſmall appearance of means for the accompliſhment of it; take heed of deſpiſing it, either *directly*, or *interpretatively. Who hath deſpiſed ſuch a day?* (ſaith the Prophet), intimating, that none ought to deſpiſe it, none hath any juſt reaſon to deſpiſe it.

2. But ſecondly, *Do what is your duty* in ſuch a day: you will ſay, What is that? I will open it in three things: 1. *Uſe the means you have.* 2. *Exerciſe a faith in God, beyond the probable effect of thoſe means.* 3. Make up in *prayer*, what you will want in action, through a want of means. Of each of theſe a word or two.

1. *Uſe thoſe means and grounds of hope which you have.* If *David* hath but a ſling and a ſtone to go out againſt *Goliah* with, yet he will uſe them. Means that have a natural vertue in them, or a divine inſtitution, have Gods ſtamp upon them, and muſt be uſed, leaving the event and ſucceſs unto God: we muſt neither idolize means, by attributing the divine Efficiency to them; nor yet tempt God by a neglect of them, when God affords us them. You ſhall obſerve God ſometimes commanding the uſe of means, which had no rational tendency to the production of the effect: as what influence could the *Iſraelites* blowing with *Rams-horns*, and the Army encompaſſing the City ſeven days, have upon the walls of *Jericho*; yet the *Iſraelites* were bound to uſe them, becauſe they had the ſtamp of a divine Inſtitution upon them. It is much the ſame caſe, when they have a natural vertue, or a rational tendency; there is a divine ſtamp too, though of a different nature: what means are proper muſt be uſed, how mean ſoever they appear in our eyes. What proportion was there betwixt *Jonathan* and his Armour-bearer, and the whole Garriſon of the *Philiſtines*, between *Jeroboams* Army, and *Abijahs*? This but four hundred, the other eight hundred thouſand; between the Army of *Aſia*, and that of the *Ethiopians* and *Lubims*, 2 *Chron.* 14. God often works, yea, he ordinarily worketh by ſmall means, and Providence brings forth its great work in the day of mans *ſmall things.* If we be ſure that we are in Gods way, and about his work, let the means be what they will, if lawful, and rational, it is our duty to uſe them; God muſt be honoured in his own Inſtitutions, and ſought in his own way: though the means be ſmall, and our humane hopes ſmall; yet if we expect Gods bleſſing, this mercy muſt be ſought in the uſe of thoſe means which the Providence of God layeth before us.

2. But ſecondly, *The duty of a Chriſtian will lye much in the exerciſe of his Faith in God, beyond the probability of the means.* This is the great duty of a Chriſtian, and the very end which God aimeth at in cutting us ſhort of means many times. I think we may ſay, *Ubi media deficiunt ibi fides incipit*; where means begin to fail, there faith begins to work: Where we are out of ſight, as to means, there's a room for faith; *For it is* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *the evidence of things not ſeen:* By *faith*, here I mean, *a truſting and relying upon God, as a God able and faithful.* But

to

to open this a little more clearly to you: I will ſhew you, 1. *In what caſes we may warrantably exerciſe a faith in God beyond the vertue, and probability of means.* 2. *What means we may uſe for the help of our faith in this caſe.* 3. *What encouragements we may take to our ſelves in ſuch a caſe to ſet our faith on work.*

1 Queſt. *In what caſes may a Chriſtian exerciſe faith in God for the accompliſhment, beyond the vertue, efficacy and probability of humane means, to be uſed in order to it?*

1. To this I anſwer, The object of faith muſt be *a Promiſe.* It is ridiculous to talk of an exerciſe of faith in God, for an accompliſhment, for which we have no word to warrant us in the expectation of it: But now, a Promiſe may be either *particular*, or *General*; of old many had particular perſons, and the Nation of the *Jews* had particular promiſes made to them by God immediately, or mediately by his Prophets; we have no ſuch, God hath left us unto his written Word. There are many general promiſes, which ſhall be made good ſtill to particular Churches and perſons: Hence is our difficulty to conclude what it is we may exerciſe a faith in God, for bringing to paſs. To direct you a little,

1. *Where you have a particular promiſe*, the caſe is plain. Some ſuch there are, as for the *deſtruction of Antichriſt*, &c.

2. In the want of a ſpecial particular Promiſe, a *general promiſe is a ſufficient object for our faith.* General promiſes made to the Church and people of God, are applicable to particular Churches, and particular Saints.

3. *Every Precept doth imply a Promiſe:* God hath certainly promiſed a bleſſing upon the doing of that which he hath commanded us to do; no man ſerveth God for nothing.

4 *Whatſoever iſſue certainly conduceth to the glory of God, is under a Promiſe:* God hath reſolved to glorifie himſelf, and he ordereth all his actions in order to that end.

The ſubſtance of all this amounts to thus much: We may exerciſe a faith in God, and truſt in him for accompliſhing by his Providence whatſoever in his Word, he hath either more particularly, or generally promiſed: or whatſoever he hath commanded us to act in tendency unto, or whatſoever doth certainly tend to the glorifying of his great and holy Name. Now if any thing of this nature be upon the wheel, although we ſee the preſent vi-

ſible means in order to the accompliſhment of it be ſmall, and in all appearance diſproportioned to the greatneſs of the event; yet a Chriſtian uſing what lawful means the Providence of God lays before him, may warrantably truſt in God for the exerting a further power for the accompliſhment of it, than is in the means which at preſent are apportioned to it. But this is now an hard thing to us. Let me therefore ſecondly, *direct you what you ſhould do in a day of ſmall things*, for the advantaging of your *faith* in this noble Exerciſe. I ſhall offer but two things in the Caſe:

1. *Keep your Eye as much off the means, and as much upon God as you can.* We have ſo much of *ſenſe* and reaſon in us, that we are very prone from one or other of them to take all our meaſures about future events. If we would keep our hearts ſteady in a time of ſuch exigencies as theſe, we muſt ſhut the Eyes both of our *ſenſe* and *reaſon*. Faith credits a Propoſition, neither upon the demonſtrations of the one of theſe, nor the concluſions of the other; but the meer authority of God. Men count it wiſdom when they are upon precipices, never to look downward, but upward; if they look downward, their weak heads are apt to be giddy. Chriſtians in ſuch ſtreſſes of Providence as theſe are, have nothing elſe to do: if they look downward, their ſenſe, their reaſon, ſaith, *how can theſe things be? If God would make windows in heaven* (ſaith that Nobleman) *theſe things could not be.* Our poring upon means in the day of our ſmall things hindereth the exerciſe of our faith in God. *If the foundations be deſtroyed* (ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. 11. 3,) *what can the righteous do?* Means are the foundations of our natural hopes: now if theſe be deſtroyed, if there be little or nothing of theſe, what can we do? Wicked men are indeed at their wits-ends, they deſpond and deſpair; but ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, v. 4, *The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lords throne is in heaven, his eyes ſee, his eye-lids try the children of men* God is ſtill where he was, and hath the ſame power, the ſame knowledg of things, the ſame rule and dominion. Twice in Scripture *Abraham* is propounded to us as a noble Example; and a father of the faithful in this thing, *Rom.* 4. God had promiſed him a Son, a Son of his Wife *Sarah*; he grew to be an hundred years old, his Wife many years paſt child bearing; here was no means: yet *Abraham* believeth for a Child, and he was not *weak in the faith* (ſaith the Apoſtle), *Rom.*

Rom. 4. 18, 19, 20. How doth he behave himſelf? The Apoſtle telleth you, That *he conſidered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, nor yet the deadneſs of Sarahs womb; he ſtaggered not at the Promiſe, but was ſtrong in faith giving glory to God; being fully perſwaded that what he had promiſed, he was able to perform.* *Abraham*, that he might keep up his heart, fixed on the promiſe; he conſidered not the nothingneſs or improbability of the means; he conſidered nothing but the *power*, and *faithfulneſs of God.* God had ſaid it, there was a promiſe for it, a promiſe from him who could not lye: then he conſidereth, that he who had promiſed was *able alſo to perform*: an honeſt faithful man may fail in his promiſe, becauſe he may not be able to perform; but as God was faithful, ſo he was alſo able; he keeps his Eye off means, fixed upon God. So again, *Heb.* 11. 17, 18, 19, *By faith Abraham when he was tried offered up Iſaac, and he that had received the promiſe offered up his only begotten ſon; of whom it was ſaid, that in Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called, accounting that God was able to raiſe him up even from the dead.* *Abraham* had a promiſe, that in *Iſaac* his ſeed ſhould be called. God calls *Abraham* with his own hand to ſlay *Iſaac*, he could not but have ſuch thoughts as theſe: Lord, if *Iſaac* be gone, where is thy promiſe? what becomes of thy word? *how ſhall my ſeed be called in him?* how ſhall I be the father of the Jewiſh Nation, if *Iſaac* be he, in whom my ſeed muſt be called, and he be dead before he hath a child? He had nothing to relieve him under theſe thoughts but this, *That God was able to raiſe him from the dead:* hither he flies, and keeps up his faith in the Promiſe, by turning his eye off from the means, and meerly conſidering the power and faithfulneſs of God. You ſhall find *Aſa* doing thus, 2 *Chron.* 14. 9, 10, 11: *Aſa* had but an Army of *five hundred thouſand*: *Zerah* the *Ethiopian*, cometh out againſt him with an Army of a *million*, and *three hundred Chariots*, there was double the number he had: If he had look'd upon the means, he muſt have deſponded; how ſhould five hundred thouſand deal with ten hundred thouſand? but he looks off the means, and fixeth his Eye upon God. *Ver.* 11, He *cryeth unto the Lord*, and ſaith, *Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God, for we reſt on thee; and in thy Name we go againſt this multitude: O Lord, thou art our God, let not man prevail againſt thee.*

Secondly,

Secondly, In ſuch a day conſider the *experiences of Gods people*: conſider *what they did*, and *how they ſped*. What they did, that you heard in the inſtance both of *Abraham*, and *Aſa*. They ſhut the Eyes of their ſenſe and natural reaſon; they took off their Eyes from all conſideration of means, and eyed only *the certainty of the Promiſe*; the *faithfulneſs of God*, and *the power of God*. So did *Abraham*, ſo did *Aſa*. Then 2. *Conſider how they ſped*: *Abraham* had a Son at the ſet-time; *Abraham* had his Son reprieved, when the knife was at his throat, and his ſeed was called in *Iſaac*. *The Lord ſmote the Ethiopians before Aſa, and before Juda*, &c. ſaith the Text, 2 *Chron.* 14. 12, 13, 14. Now it is a great encouragement to us in the exerciſes of our faith, to conſider the experiences of other of the Servants of God in their exerciſes of Faith. *Our fathers truſted in thee* (ſaith *David*, Pſalm 22); *they truſted, and were delivered*. The ſtrength of this lieth in the ſtedfaſtneſs and unchangeableneſs of God: he is the ſame, his name is *I am*. *David* as to *Goliah*, raiſed up his faith upon his former experiences in ſlaying the *Lion and the Bear*, 1 Sam. 17, and upon the experience of others, *Pſalm* 22: nothing is more conducive, to help and relieve a Chriſtian, weak as to his faith, in the day either of ſmall things, as to the Church of God, in which he is conſidered as a member; or in the day of ſmall things as to his own perſonal concerns. God chuſeth the day of ſmall things to be ſeen in: it is the day which *Providence* chuſeth to ſhew it ſelf great in. And you may thus advantage your faith in God in ſuch a day. Now for your further encouragement in this exerciſe of faith in God, beyond the viſibility or apparent probability of means, I ſhall offer theſe things to your conſideration.

1. That it *is Gods ordinary time and method of working*. This is that which I diſcourſed to you in juſtification of the Obſervation, and proved it to you from a plenty of inſtances, and therefore ſhall not enlarge here.

2. That *God never worketh with ſo much advantage to his own glory*, as in ſuch a time when he fulfilleth his Word in the day of mans ſmall things. We never need doubt Gods purſuing of the great ends of his glory; He doth all things for himſelf, his glory is the end of all his great works. Now I ſay, God never worketh more for the advantage of his glory than in ſuch exigents: then is his power, and the greatneſs thereof moſt eminently made known: Then ſhall his people more ſee, and confeſs the Arm of the Lord.

3. Con-

3. Conſider (thirdly) this is *the proper work of faith.* It is true, we ought to exerciſe Faith in the uſe of means, let them be never ſo great, never ſo probable for the accompliſhment of the the End: but the proper place for faith, is, where means are weak, or wanting, to put the Soul in hope againſt hope. It is *the evidence of things not ſeen:* as patience is an habit of grace given the Soul for a day of adverſity, ſo faith is made for an hour of ſenſible darkneſs.

4. Laſtly, Nothing ſo *pleaſeth* and *engageth God, as ſuch an exerciſe of faith. Aſa*, 2 Chron. 14. 11, uſeth it as an argument with God: *Help us, O Lord, for we reſt on thee, and in thy Name we go againſt this great multitude.* The next Verſe ſaith, *God ſmote the Ethiopians*, 2 Chron. 13. 18. You will find that *Jeroboam*'s Army was full double to the number of *Abijah*'s: and could not have been conquered without ſome extraordinary influence of God upon *Abijah*'s ſide. Now would you know what engaged the Lord of Hoſts. *ver.* 18, *Thus the children of Iſrael were brought under at that time; and the men of Judah prevailed, becauſe they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers.* See the contrary, 2 *Chron.* 16. 7; *Hanani* the Seer cometh to *Aſa*, and telleth him, *Becauſe thou haſt relied on the King of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore the Hoſt of the King of Syria is eſcaped out of thy hands.* Thus I have ſhewed you a ſecond thing, in which I conceive the duty of a Chriſtian lies in the day of *ſmall things*, viz. The exerciſe of a faith in God, beyond the vertue and probability of the means.

3. A third piece of his duty is, *To beware of the uſe of ſinful means in order to the accompliſhment of what he deſireth.* It is a great vanity to which through our miſapprehenſion of means we are very ſubject: if we want lawful means, to make uſe of *unlawful*, thinking to add to the day of ſmall things this way. *Abraham* failed in this, going in to *Hagar*: ſo did *Aſa*, in the inſtance beforementioned, though he acted otherwiſe, when the *Ethiopians* and *Lubims* were againſt him. Indeed, nothing is more contrary to faith than this; it ſpeaketh a plain diſtruſt in God: nothing is more improper and needleſs, ſuppoſing the truth of this Obſervation.

4. The laſt thing to be done in ſuch a caſe, is *Prayer to God, to ſupply by his arm what is wanting in humane means.* To this *Aſa*, and *Abijah*, & all the ſervants of God in ſuch diſtreſſes have had recourſe. God will be found in a way of Prayer.

SERM.

SERMON XVIII.

Psalm CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I Am pointing you to some observable things in the motions of Divine Providence, though the way of God in it be in many things unsearchable, and past finding out. Three Observations I have already made, justified them by plenty of instances, and endeavoured to give you some reasonable account of them, and suted some Application to them. I proceed now to a fourth, which you may take thus:

Observ. 4. *The Providence of God as to its works, relating to his Church and people, rarely as to circumstances answereth the expectations, and confidences of the best of Gods people.* I will open it in two things:

1. God never faileth *the grounded expectations of his people, as to any thing which he hath promised.* Psa. 9. 18, *The expectation of the poor shall not perish.* Their expectation is upon God, and their Souls wait for God, *Psalm* 62. 5, and their expectation and confidence in him shall not fail; *They that trust in him shall not be ashamed.* It is made the portion of a wicked man, *Prov.* 11. 7. *Prov.* 10. 18, that *his expectation shall perish*; but the *hope of the righteous shall be gladness.* The Wiseman saith, *His expectation shall not be cut off*, Prov. 23. 18; The reason is plain, The *expectation of good men* is an expectation of *faith*, and the object of faith is the *word of God*; and *heaven and earth shall pass away, before one tittle of Gods word*, be it of promise, or precept, shall fail: Many promi-

ses

ſes as to the *Jews*, and as to Goſpel-Churches are fulfilled; ſome are yet to be fulfilled: Antichriſt is yet to be deſtroyed; The *Jews* (doubtleſs) are to be called in a more plentiful manner than they have yet been. There are many Scriptures that ſeem to aſſure a more united, peaceable, glorious ſtate of the Church. Now theſe Promiſes, are matter of Gods peoples expectations; and as to the things promiſed, the expectations of the poor people of God ſhall not periſh for ever: the things ſhall certainly be accompliſhed. If their hopes, and expectations, and confidences might fail; the word of God, the truth of God might fail: but this cannot be.

2. But ſecondly, as to *circumſtances you ſhall obſerve, God rarely anſwereth the conſidences and expectations of the beſt of men*, unleſs they be part of the Promiſe. By *circumſtances*, I underſtand whatſoever is not eſſential to the thing promiſed. Particularly, 1. *Time, when a thing is done.* 2. *Place, where a thing is to be done.* 3. *Particular perſons*, by whom, as Inſtruments, God will do his work. 4. *Particular means, or actions*, by which the things ſhould be brought to paſs. Theſe and ſuch like I call *Circumſtances*, as to which Gods Providence often fails, not only the earneſt deſires and expectations, but the higheſt perſwaſions and confidences of men; yea even of ſuch as fear him.

1. As to *perſons*. Who, if he had not exactly conſidered the Promiſe, ſubjoined to what God had ſaid, they ſhould four hundred years be ſervants to the *Egyptians*, (and it was not like *Joſeph* ſhould indeed live ſo long); but I ſay, if he had not conſidered that, but only received a notion of the delivery of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, would not have thought *Joſeph* ſhould have been the man who ſhould have given conduct to that motion? Who would have expected it from *Moſes*, a poor *Hebrew* child, expoſed to the next tide in a thin Ark of Bulruſhes? yet by *Moſes*, Providence did the work. When *Moſes* had done that work, and given them forty years conduct in the Wilderneſs, and was grown an experienced Commander; who would not have thought, and expected that he ſhould have led them over *Jordan*, and given them poſſeſſion of the promiſed Land? But *Moſes* muſt die, and his ſervant *Joſhua* muſt do it. In the captivity of *Babylon*, the believing-*Jews* doubtleſs had great expectation of a deliverance, according to the Promiſes ſo often repeated by the Prophet: and unqueſtionably they had their expectations upon this, and that

person, probable to have done it; but who could have dreamed that *Cyrus* should be the man? The Army of *Israel* under *Saul*, might reasonably have expected that some or other of the great Soldiers, which were at that time doubtless in the Army of the *Israelites*, should have encountred *Goliah*; Who could have thought of a Shepherd's coming and doing of it, with a sling and a stone? There is a Promise under the New Testament for the bringing down of Antichrist, the *ruin of Babylon*: how often have mens expectations been upon this, or that, or the other Prince to have done it? and to what strange confidences have some, even good people grown? that this, or that person should be the man, should pull Antichrist out of his Seat: we see hitherto God hath failed all their expectations; the person appears not that shall do that great work; and when he shall appear, it is likely that it shall be one never talk'd of, never thought of.

Secondly, *As to Time*: We have a strange curiosity to know the *times* and seasons, which is not for us to know, but are reserved only to God. *Tell us* (say the Disciples) *when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the World*, Matth. 24. 3? Acts 1. 6, *Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* There are three great Promises, or four, concerning the Churches of God, the fulfilling of which we yet expect, 1. That for the *destruction of Antichrist*, 1 Thess. 2. 7, 8. 2. For the *full conversion of the Jews*, Rom. 11. 26, (to speak nothing of many other Texts which look that way). 3. *Christs second coming*, of which you know the Scripture speaketh plentifully. 4. A *more calm, and flourishing, and peaceable state of the Church*; which many Scriptures also seem to look toward: whether for a thousand years precisely, under the conduct of Christs coming personally, or no, hath, you know, been much disputed: but the generality of the most inquisitive Divines into the will of God, do think there shall be a more peaceable and calm state of the Church of God. Now it is strange to observe the curiosity of many in searching out the precise time when these things, or some of them, should begin, or be. Some have fixed this year; some another. How many agreed in the year 1666, is known to those any thing acquainted with books: we see the Providence of God hath hitherto failed all mens conjectures; and still it holds, that of these days and hours knoweth no man; the best Prophets have proved but vain guessers.

I might give you a-like instances as to Places and Means: but you will generally observe it, That the Providence of God rarely, as to circumstances, suteth any of our fancies. And the same thing we shall observe as to particular cases of Christians, who are ready to think, that if ever, by such an instrument at such a time, or by such a means, they must, or shall obtain their desired mercy. They obtain it probably, but by quite other means, and at other times, and by other instruments than they fancied, and such perhaps as they never thought of; the thing is plain, and evidenced from a daily experience: let us a little enquire into the Reason of it. Hath God a pleasure in frustrating the expectations of his people? or exposing them to the worlds censures, as persons pretending to more acquaintance than they indeed have with the Counsels of God? Surely no: But God by this method of his Provdience does two things: 1. *He punisheth the rashness and vanity of his peoples spirits.* 2. *He more consulteth the glory of his own name.*

1. *He by this means chastiseth the vanity and rashness of his people:* there is a great deal of vanity in peoples spirits in this particular. Let me shew you the great evil of this in some few particulars.

1. *There is in it an unwarrantable curiosity.* *Job* tells us, *chap.* 11. 12, That *vain man would be wise, though he be like a wild asses colt.* We have a great itch after knowledg of things, which God hath hidden from us. Now this is a great Errour, and you shall observe it continually checked by our Saviour, when any thing of it discovered it self even in his best Disciples: when they said to him, *Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* He saith unto them, *It is not for you to know the times and seasons,* Acts 1. 6, 7. When *Peter* saith to him, *John* 21. 21, 22, *Lord, what shall this man do?* Mark our Saviours answer; *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.* When the Disciples asked him, *Matth.* 24. 3, *Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? Jesus answereth and saith unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.* God of old had an Ark into which none might look. There are secrets of his Will, which are as yet the Ark of God: we would fain be looking into this Ark, there's our vanity. God chastens us in it with disappointments, that we may learn, not to pry into Gods secrets; things which we can-

not see, because God hath hidden them; the things are sure, the vision is certain, and there is an appointed time, but that appointed time is not published.

2. There is as to these things *an ungrounded confidence, which God also chastiseth by these disappointments:* There is nothing more worthy of a Christian, than a believing God upon his word, and a relying upon him for the fulfilling of it. There is nothing more idle, nothing more unworthy of him, than to be confident, where he hath no word to set his foot upon. Now such a confidence as this, is the confidence of people as to circumstances. It is true, as to the *Jews* deliverance out of *Egypt*, and out of *Babylon*, the promise did not only extend to the thing, but to the time: the four hundred years for the first were named, and the 70 years for the latter; yea, and the particular person *Cyrus*, by whom God would deliver them. But it is not so as to the promises which we live in expectation of the fulfilling of, as to the Church: God hath no-where revealed the year for the ruin of Antichrist, nor for the calling of the Jews; nor when the halcion-days of the Church shall begin, or when Christ shall come to the last judgment. If people will expect any of these things shall begin, or be at such a time, in such a year, by such persons, their Confidences are without ground or bottom, their pretended faith but a rude and bold presumption, a rush growing up without any mire, and a flag growing up without water; and it is but reasonable, that God should chastise these vain Confidences.

3. There is in these things *a sinful limitation of God.* It is laid to the charge of the *Israelites*, *That they limited the Holy One of Israel*, Psal. 78. 41. When men tye up God to their circumstances in the fulfilling of his promises, or his threatnings, they limit God. Now this is a great sin, God is a free and a powerful Agent, he works by means, or without means; sometimes by means that seem probable, sometimes by such as have no appearance of probability to produce the effect: he can work how, and when, and by whom he pleaseth: he that fixeth God to his circumstances, secretly saith, It must be thus, or no way; by this means, and by no other, now or never. What ground else is there for the expectation or confidence, if God hath no where revealed his Will as to particular circumstances, only as to the accomplishment of the thing in general? God will have us know we are not to limit him.

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4. Such expectations and confidences are usually but *introductions to a greater unbelief.* God hath promised the things in the plain letter of Scripture: the Vision is sure; vain man would be wise, and search out when these things shall be, and where accomplished, and by what instruments and means; at length he fixeth his eye upon some instruments at work in the world, or some means which he fancieth probable to bring these words into a Being. Upon these he raiseth up to himself high expectations, and groweth very confident, that in such a year the thing will be; and such a person shall be Gods Instrument, and by such means he will effect it: It proveth no such thing. What a temptation this often proves to men, to believe nothing of the thing; but because they have deceived themselves in expectations and confidences, for which they have no ground, to think also that God hath deceived them, and there shall no such thing at all be as he hath promised?

5. And lastly, *These expectations and confidences prove oftentimes very great temptations to the use of unlawful means, in order to the bringing about of what we would have, and know God will bring to pass*; and do but fancy that he will do it at such, or such a time, or by such and such instruments. The story of the *Anabaptists* in *Germany* is a dreadful story to this purpose; There is a world of evil in these vain confidences and expectations, and consequent to them, which God sometimes punisheth in a more smart and severe manner, as he did to those Rusticks, that so much disturbed the *Civil peace* in *Germany*; but generally punisheth by disappointments, to bring us to a regular trust and confidence in him, where we have a plain and sure word to fix our foot upon.

Thus I have shewed you the reasonableness of these cross motions of Divine Providence, in point of Divine Justice; that God might punish peoples sinnings in them, and caution others against the like guilt.

2. Let me (in the second place) shew you the reasonableness of it in order to the *glory of God*; which I have often told you is the great end which God aims at in all his great Works, whether of Creation, or of Providence.

1. *The work is more eminently seen to be the Lords*, although he in effecting it, maketh use of instruments and humane means. God doth not always, yea, he doth not ordinarily work miraculously,

culouſly, but maketh uſe of rational means, and worketh in, with, and by them. Now if God in theſe workings ſhould make uſe of means, and inſtruments, and circumſtances, which our fancies preſcribe unto him; we ſhould be apt to overlook the mighty Power and Efficiency of God in the means; for the more we have a proſpect of an event in the ſecond Cauſes before it comes, the leſs we ſee of the firſt Cauſe in it. But when we ſee our ſelves diſappointed in all our expectations, as to time, perſons, means, circumſtances, and the thing brought about by perſons we thought not of, at a time we looked not for it, by means not at all in our eyes as probable to effect it; the more is the hand and power of God ſeen in the effect, while we cry out, *This is the Lords doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.*

2. Again, God hath more Glory from the *Prayers, Humiliations, and Praiſes of his people.* By theſe things God is glorified, as his Will is done, as his Power is recognized. Diſappointments produce more extraordinary *Prayers* and *Humiliations:* when we meet with them, we ſee the folly of our raſhneſs, ungrounded confidences; and ſee reaſon to lye low before the Lord, with more fervent Prayers to God, to take his work into his own hand, and having manifeſted to us our follies, now to declare his own wiſdom, that having broken our arms of fleſh, he would now make bare his own holy arm; and the fulfilling of his word at laſt by means and circumſtances not known to us, produce praiſes, adorings, and admirings of his infinite wiſdom, and further confidences in God for the time to come; when we ſee arms of fleſh broken, and find our bruiſed reeds and broken ſtaffs but running into our hands, and wounding us, inſtead of helping us. I have done with the Doctrinal part of this Obſervation, I come now to the Application of it.

Uſe 1. The firſt Uſe may be, *Not to wonder at diſappointments of this nature, and to take heed they be no temptations to us.* Here are you ſee two branches: 1. *Not to wonder at them.* There is nothing more ordinary; it is not often that a Church, or body of people, or a particular ſoul, or perſon, obtaineth any great mercy or deliverance in the way they looked for it, or at that moment of time they expected it in. God delights to ſurprize his peoples hearts with joy and gladneſs: we are ſick, and we are ready to think ſuch a perſon, and by ſuch a means,

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must heal us: the cure comes quite another way. *Naaman* thought the Prophet would have come, and laid his hand upon his leprous body: the Prophet bids him go and wash in the waters of *Jordan.* We are in terrors, in troubles of mind, &c. and we are ready to think, such, or such a Minister must speak to us, and then we shall be relieved; he cometh, and applieth what help he can; we are yet disquieted, and find no relief at all; the mercy comes at last quite another way: Mercy comes to Gods People, as Judgment (ordinarily) comes upon sinners, in a way, and upon a day they looked not for it: when with *Agag* they say, *Surely the bitterness of death is past:* I say, so mercies ordinarily come to Gods People, in an unlooked-for time, in a way, and by persons they looked not for it by.

2. *Let not such disappointments be temptations to you:* Let them not be temptations to make you *distrust the promises, or to use any unlawful and indirect means to obtain your desires.* It is not God that hath deceived you: you have but deceived your selves: God hath made you certain promises of the things; you will limit him to do it by such a time, by such means, by such persons and instruments: The promises express no such things, but have left God to his liberty. You have no reason to distrust Gods word, because you have disappointed your selves.

Use 2. Let us make this use of the Observation, *To embrace the promises, and to depend upon God for the fulfilling of them, without limiting him as to circumstances.* Let us do this as to those great promises which are behind to be fulfilled: as to the *destruction of Antichrist, the calling of the Jews, the second coming of Christ, the more happy and calm state of the Church,* &c. The Scripture seems clear as to the things, that they shall be; but it is far from being clear, that it shall be in such a year, or by such a mean or instrument; there is nothing particular of this nature for a good Christian to set the foot of his faith upon. I have shewed you, there is a great vanity of Christians in these things. I know Christians have a very great curiosity to search dark Prophecies, to find out the particular circumstances for these things: I cannot commend their diligence; it is much like the hard labour and study of those that have been studying the *Philosophers stone*; a great deal of money, and much more precious time hath been spent about it, nothing yet effected; no more

more hath there been in these things: men have wearied themselves in vain, and their study hath been but *labour and travel.*

2. Again, *As to promises that concern our particular souls,* for comfort, for a victory over temptations, *&c.* they are many, they are exceeding sweet; but they are *general,* not to this or that individual person, but to such as love and fear the Lord, to persons under such or such qualifications; they are exceeding sweet, but they are not made with circumstances. God will have his people trust him, he will have them wait for him. Take heed either of saying, *These things shall never be:* this is to give the lye to the God of Truth. *God says thou shalt live:* thou sayest, *I shall dye, I shall fall by the hand of this temptation:* and take heed of saying, *If it ever be, it must be by such a time, by such a Minister, it would have been by such a Minister,* &c. This is to limit the Holy One of *Israel*; thou knowest not the ways of God, it is a knowledg too high, too deep for thee: Providence usually bringeth home, both the promises to the Saints, and the threatnings to the Sinners, in a way quite different from what they looked for, or it may be expected it in.

I have spoken enough already to take Christians off this; but yet because it is a great point, a thing wherein we are prone to slip, and wherein our slipping is more than ordinarily dangerous: let me spend a little time further to argue you out of this vanity, and to direct your Souls in the expectation of the fulfilling of Divine Promises.

1. Consider *how much the strength of your souls is spent, and how vainly, in the expectations of your own fancies.* As the expectation of that for substance, which God never promised, is but the expectation of our own fancy: so neither is the expectation of what God hath promised under such circumstances as are no part of the promse. Now the strength of our Souls runneth much out in such expectations: Let a man but fancy, that in such a year *Babylon shall fall,* The *Jews shall be called*; *The thousand years shall begin,* That by such a time the Church in distress, or his Soul in distress, shall be delivered: It is strange to observe, how the Soul will spend it self upon such a Notion; the thoughts of men run upon it, their wits are bent to interpret dark Scriptures into their own fancies: it presently becomes the main article of their faith, and the great argument of their hope, and the whole subject of their discourses; and at last (possibly) they

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are enforced to acknowledg, that they had a lye in their right hand. The Prophet useth the expressions upon an higher argument; but yet they are applicable here: *Why spend you your strength for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which will not profit?* There is nothing that is *bread* for a Soul, but the Word of God; it hath pitied my Soul many times to observe many (otherwise I hope serious persons), how they have spent themselves in such Enquiries and expectations as these.

Consider (secondly) *how the faith of your souls is often endangered and shaken by your disappointments in these things.* I do but name this again; for I before enlarged upon it. How ready are we to dis-believe the Promise wholly, because it comes not in the circumstances that we fancied it would come! The Apostle was aware of this great Evil; and therefore when some had been prophecying in the Church of the *Thessalonians*, of a sudden coming of Christ to Judgment, he writeth to that Church, 2 *Thess.* 2. 1, 2, *Now we beseech you brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us; as if the day of Christ were at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means.* The Apostle saw that this hasty and ungrounded expectation of Christs coming, under such circumstances as he had now here revealed, did not only tend to the troubling of Christians when they saw themselves disappointed, but also to the shaking of their faith, as to the thing it self: and therefore beseecheth them, *by the coming of our Lord Jesus, and by their gathering together unto him:* what can be the meaning of that, but this? If ever you expect *the joyful coming of Christ*, and would keep your faith steady as to it; if ever you would be with us gathered unto him, concern not your selves in those who would limit the Promises to the circumstances of their own fancying: Let them pretend *Revelations of the Spirit*, or *wrest the word of God*; yet saith the Apostle, *let them not deceive you.* You have an eminent instance of this shaking of Christians faith, so consequential to this limiting of God to circumstances, *Luke* 22. 31. There was a Promise *of redeeming Israel:* Christ had been crucified, and three days were passed, and they had heard nothing tending to their expectation: say they, *We trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.*

Their faith began to ſhake as to the main Promiſe, becauſe Providence in the accompliſhment of them, did not fit it with the circumſtances which they had fancied.

Thirdly, Conſider, it much hindereth that duty of *waiting upon God, which the Scripture ſo often preſſeth upon us.* I need not mention *particular Scriptures:* there is hardly any one duty more preſſed upon Chriſtians in Scripture, than this patient waiting upon, and for God. Now how doth that Soul wait upon God, that limits God to his circumſtances of time, place, means, perſons? he indeed waiteth upon thoſe circumſtances a while; but when he is diſappointed as to them, he knoweth not how to wait upon God any longer. The Soul which truly waiteth on God, leaveth circumſtances unto him. You will ſay unto me in the next place, *What then is the duty of a Chriſtian with reſpect to the Promiſes, whether concerning the Church, or his own ſoul in particular?* I anſwer, to *receive* and *embrace them*, and be *perſwaded* of the *truth of them*, and leave unto God the way, time, manner, and circumſtances for fulfilling of them, which he hath not revealed: going on in the way of our plain duty, till God ſhall pleaſe to give a being to his Word. You ſhall ſee your duty, *Heb.* 11.13, *Theſe all died in the faith, not having received the promiſes; but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſwaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims on the earth.* What promiſes were theſe? The promiſes of *Canaan*, of the *Meſſias*. *Abraham* ſaw Chriſts day, *and rejoyced* (ſaith our Saviour); They *received theſe promiſes in their ears*, God revealed his will for theſe things; they *ſaw them afar off*, as things like to come to paſs many years after; *they were perſwaded of them*, of the truth of them, that God would *give them a being:* they embraced them with thankful believing hearts, and lived ſo, as that they confeſſed themſelves ſtrangers and pilgrims of the Earth; in a conſtant courſe of ſelf-denial, and fulfilling the will of God, and in a crucifixion to the World: they never ſtood troubling themſelves to ſearch out the particular time, and circumſtances, when, and which way God would do theſe things: but kept in the faith of the Promiſe, leaving circumſtances unto God: Let us go and do likewiſe. I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe with a Text of our Saviours, *Luke* 17.20,21, *And when he was demanded of the Phariſees, when the Kingdom of God ſhould come?* He anſwered and ſaid, *the Kingdom of God cometh*

eth not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there, for behold the Kingdom of God is within you. Let me a little open these words to you: *The Kingdom of God*, that is, *the great things which concern the Kingdom of God; these are not* brought to pass, and come not with *Observation*, Μετὰ παρατηρήσεως, that's the Original phrase, we translate with *Observation*. There are divers interpretations given of that Text: Not with a *superstitious observation of days, months, and years*; so some make the sense, according to that of the Apostle to the *Galatians*, *You observe days, and months, and years: I am afraid of you*, &c. And *Rom.* 14, 17, *The kingdom of God is not in meat, and drink, but righteousness and peace.* Some understand it of *external Observations* of meat and drink, such as God had commanded to the *Jews*: but the most, and most valuable Interpreters agree in one of these two senses: which indeed well considered, both make but one.

1. *So as it may or can be observed.* Thus *Brugensis*, *Piscator*, and *Beza*, who indeed translates it, *Ita ut observari possit*; so as it can be observed. *Theophylact* understands it of *the time*; so as the time cannot be fixed, nor the place neither. It followeth, *Neither shall they say, Lo here is Christ, or lo there.*

2. *Not with a worldly Pomp, Splendor* or *Ceremony.* Thus *Stella*, *Chemnitius*, *Erasmus*, *Piscator*, &c. This is the same indeed with the other: and therefore they generally add, *ut observari possit*, we do not use to observe the coming of a *Kingdom*, but by observing some *Pomp*, *Splendor*, &c. preliminary to it. Now (saith Christ) the Kingdom of God cometh not so as it can be observed, it stealeth upon men and surprizeth them: *it cometh not by observation.* Christ indeed hath given us general signs of his second coming, and of the end of the World, *&c.* But he hath also added, *Of that day and hour knoweth no man.* I suppose the same thing is to be said as to the Promises for *calling the Jews*: for the expected *peace, and tranquillity of the Church of God*, when the *usual years shall begin*, &c. Believe the thing, pray, wait, that is all which we have to do in the case.

SERMON XIX.

Pſalm CVII. 43.

Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things: even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

I Am yet proceeding in recommending to you ſome further Obſervations I have made upon the motions of Actual Providence, in the execution of the eternal Counſels and Purpoſes of God; and fulfilling his Word, whether of Promiſe or Threatning. Four I have done with: A Fifth I ſhall now offer and diſcourſe a little upon it.

5th Obſerv. *The Actual Providence of God, in the production of its great works, relating to his Church, or the particular members of it, doth ordinarily ſuit or fit the circumſtances of the world, or the circumſtances of particular perſons, to the work he intendeth to produce.*

I ſay *Ordinarily*. Every Rule muſt have ſome Exception: eſpecially ſuch Rules, as upon obſervation we fix concerning the methods of Divine Providence. The infinitely wiſe God treadeth not always in the ſame ſteps; I ſay, in his great works relating either to *the Church, or to ſuch particular perſons as are members of it*: Theſe two, I before told you were the great Objects of *Special Providence*. As *Canaan* of old was *the Land which God cared for, upon which* his Eye was, *from the beginning of the year to the end of it*: ſo his Church ſtill is, and to the end of the World will be the object of his more ſpecial care; and with reference to which, Providence produceth its moſt remarkable works: Hence you ſhall obſerve throughout all the Scripture, though

though mention be made of ſuch other Sons as the Patriarchs had, and other Nations and Princes contemporary with thoſe of the *Jews*, are named; yet very little of their ſtory is recorded, and that only ſubſervient to the ſtory that was to keep a Record of Gods dealings with his own people. This makes me reſtrain the Obſervation to the *Church* and *Members* of it; and that which I recommend to your remark is, Gods ordinary fitting the circumſtances of the adjacent world (which lyes round about the Church, as the mountains about *Hieruſalem*, or the Nations of old about *Canaan*) to what he is producing in his Church; and the particular circumſtances of perſons, to the work God hath to produce, more eminent with relation unto them.

1. *I will ſhew you this, with reference to the productions of Providence, relating to the collective body of his people, which we call the Church.*

2. *With reference to particular perſons, that have relation to this body, in matters of an outward concern.*

3. *With reference unto the ſouls of his people, in matters of a more inward and ſpiritual concern.*

1. *With reference to the great products of Providence relating to the body of his people, called the Church.*

1. The *Jews* (you know, under the Old Teſtament) were the only people that could lay claim to this great Name, To whom God was nigh, in the midſt of whom he dwelt, whom he ſo often delivered, and for whom he ſo ſignally engaged. Great works of Providence we read of relating to them: their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and conduct through the wilderneſs; their bringing out of *Babylon* after their ſeventy years Captivity, and re-building their Temple and City. The ſending of the *Meſſiah*. When the Providence of God ſets about theſe works, let us obſerve how God fitted circumſtances to theſe great products, *making every thing beautiful in his time* (as *Solomon* ſaith in *Eccleſ.* 3. 11.) In the bringing of the Children of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, God did two things: 1. *He brought out the Jews out of a Nation* where they had been bred, and lived ſome hundreds of years: His Providence now fitteth circumſtances to this; it ſuffereth the King of *Egypt* moſt miſerably to oppreſs them, ſo as they were weary of their lives. It is hardly elſe conceivable, that they would willingly have quitted their poſſeſſions, and their Native-Countrey, to obtain a land promiſed 400 years

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before; and that not without overcoming the difficulties of an houling wilderneſs, and many years fighting. The Providence of God alſo deſtroyeth *Egypt* by Ten ſucceſſive plagues, elſe the King and his Servants would never have let ſo many 100000 perſons go out of their Dominions. Circumſtances were fitted by God to the deſign of his Providence: they muſt be grievouſly oppreſſed, that they may be made willing to go; and *Pharaohs* People and Nation muſt be deſtroyed, that he may ſuffer them to get into a body for a march, and furniſh them with a *viaticum* for their journey. *Pharaoh* and his Army muſt be deſtroyed; alas, the *Iſraelites* are in no circumſtances fit to fight them: the Sea ſhall divide it ſelf, they ſhall ſee the *Iſraelites* go through ſafely as on dry ground: this ſhall allure them to follow them, then the waters ſhall return and ſwallow them up.

2. God *brings this people out of Babylon:* he had promiſed, that after 70 years they ſhould come out; *Cyrus*, he conquers *Babylon* juſt at that time, and it was his intereſt to let them go, as much as it was the intereſt of the Kings of *Babylon* to keep them there: He thus endeared the *Jews* to him, and thus tranſplanted a Colony; yea, and ſecured *Hieruſalem* to his obedience, which was before under the Command of the *Babylonians*, who were his Enemies.

3. The ſending of the *Meſſias* was *a great product of Divine Providence:* he was to introduce a new way of worſhip, to preach (what to them in their corrupted ſtate) was a new Doctrine: had the *Jews* been in their heighth, this would by no means have been endured by them: See how God fitteth the worlds circumſtances, to this great product of Providence: *The ſcepter is departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from his feet:* the *Jews* are become Tributaries to the *Romans*, and under their power; ſo they were not ſo briſk as they would have been: There is a general peace over all the world, ſo as the *Romans* were not ſo jealous of making parties and factions: people were more at leiſure to liſten to the Goſpel, and Prince of peace. Now comes the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. If we ſhould carry the buſineſs a little further, What great work hath God ever done ſince, in which we may not ſee a remarkable fitting of the worlds circumſtances to the production of it? I will inſtance but in one or two things, referring to the Proteſtant-Reformation.

Our reformation you know was began in the time of *Henry* the

the Eight; How did God fit our circumstances to it? King *Henry* shall fall out with the *Pope*, because he will not allow his divorce, and so shall break with him, and set up a purer course of Religion; it was hardly to have been imagined, how *England* should have been freed from Popery at another time, by the advantage of the chief Magistrates assistance.

There was a strange concurrence of Divine Providences in the reformation which was begun in *Germany*. *Luther* was raised up, a man of a most invincible spirit and courage: Printing was found out a-few years before in that very Countrey, in 1440; by which means, *Luther's*, and others books were presently diffused throughout all *Europe*, [*V. Sculteti annales*, l. 1. c. 1.] The knowledg of Arts and Learning, were just restored to the world, after the long darkness and ignorance in which Popery had muffled the world. Many secret favourers of Religion were admitted to great places in the Popish-Church, who either out of favour to the reformed Religion, or out of love to their learning, shewed great kindness to the first Reformers: several great Princes of *Germany* were also prepared; some possibly out of conscience, others out of principles of honour, favouring and protecting *Luther*. In short, the Providence of God hath hardly at any time produced any great work, in the change of the State of the Church, or of any Kingdom; but his fitting of the circumstances of the world to it, have been strangely obvious and remarkable to every observing eye.

2. Let us, secondly, take a view of the Providence of God working as to particular persons, with reference to things of a more outward concern: take it in the instances of *Joseph*, of *David*, of *Haman*, of the three Children, and *Daniel*. *David* was to be brought to be King over *Israel* and *Judah*; from a Shepherds boy, to be a great Prince; he shall first kill *Goliah*; he shall be sent for to Court, to drive away *Sauls* evil spirit with his Harp; he shall marry the Kings Daughter, and grow great with *Jonathan*. *Joseph* is to become a great man in *Egypt*; he shall first be recommended to *Pharaoh*, grow great with him, a famine shall come, he shall save much people alive; and thus be in great honour, and in a capacity to serve his Fathers family. The Providence of God designs to preserve the *Jews*, to advance *Mordecai*, to ruin *Haman*. An *Hebrew* Lady, by a strange Providence shall come to be Queen, and one that shall be *Mordecai's* Neece.

Neece. *Haman* ſhall be found upon the bed with *Eſther*, and miſtaken in his Complement to her, as if he had a deſign to force her, *&c.* Infinite are the inſtances which might be brought.

3. *Let us conſider the motions of Providence with reference to the ſouls of people, as to their beſt and moſt ſpiritual concerns.* If God hath much people in *Macedonia*, St. *Paul* ſhall be called thither: he ordereth Miniſters to places, or particular perſons to a Miniſtry proper for the work, in a ſtrange way many a time, when he hath a deſign to do good to particular ſouls. But here let me recommend one obſervation to you; When he deſigneth the tryal of a Child of his, with inward troubles and temptations, he uſually fits it with an unhealthy body, ſuted to ſuch impreſſions; and when he deſigneth the reſtoring of quiet and peace to the ſpirit, he ordinarily fits it with an healthy body: Not that all the trouble and diſquietudes of the ſpirit floweth from the indiſpoſition of the body; the contrary is evident enough to any who diligently obſerve Chriſtians at ſuch times, and may know many others under the ſame kinds, and poſſibly greater degrees of bodily diſtempers, whoſe minds are not ſo diſturbed, who have no ſuch temptations, *&c.* But ſeldom it is, but ſuch inward troubles are circumſtanced with bodily diſturbances; and ſo on the contrary, it is rare to find a peaceful, quiet, rejoycing ſpirit; but it is ſuited alſo with a freedom from bodily diſtempers, eſpecially ſuch as have an influence upon the head, and affect that. But I ſhall enlarge no further upon what is ſo evident to any who obſerveth any thing of the motions of Divine Providence.

Reaſ. Now the Reaſon of this is evident; *Becauſe, though the Providence of God ſometimes produceth things miraculouſly; yet it ordinarily produceth them by the way of means: ſome means, although poſſibly not adequate, and fully proportioned to the production.* The Providence of God is a ſervant to his Glory: that is the end for which it works, for which it always worketh, and can work for no other end: but it doth not always work for the glorifying of God in the ſame Attribute: ſometimes it glorifieth his Power, ſometimes his Wiſdom, ſometimes his Goodneſs and Mercy, *&c.* It glorified Gods Power in the deſtruction of *Pharaoh*; he was ruined by the immediate ſupernatural hand

hand of God; but ordinarily the Providence of God worketh by means, and the Wisdom of God is most eminently seen, in contriving, and ordering, and disposing means unthought-of; and yet ordinarily the Power of God is also glorified, the means being such as are very unlikely, or improbable to produce such an effect. Now this being granted, that the most ordinary way of Gods working is by means, little or much; there must be an ordering and preparation of them: and this is the reason of Gods fitting adjacent circumstances to his work which he produceth; those circumstances, being the ordinary means, which God thinks fit to make use of, to work in, with, and by. And here the great Power and Wisdom of God is seen, in ordering the affairs of the world, so as they shall sute his great designs and purposes, that men see reason to cry out, *O the depth of the wisdom and of the Counsel of God!* So that, look as God did not bring man into the World, till he had fitted the World for his use and Government; nor doth bring any creature (by his continued Creation) into the World, before its table is prepared: the Flie, the Silk-worm, *&c.* doth not prevent its meat; so neither doth Gods work prevent the means, by which he designeth the accomplishment of it. Thus every thing is brought forth in its time, and every work of God is thus made glorious.

Secondly, *God by this means, putteth a wonderful beauty upon his works of Providence.* The beauty of any creature, you know, doth not only lie in the colour of it, and the lovelines of that; but in the *Symmetry* and *proportion of all its parts.* Hence our Eye judgeth sometimes a person that is of a good complexion, to have little or nothing of beauty; but a good mixture of colour, with a good *symmetry and proportion of parts*, must concur to a perfect beauty. *Gods work is perfect, and his ways are Judgment*, Deut. 32. 4, and *he is excellent in working*, Jer. 32. 19. The glory of the Lord is much concerned, not only in the *goodnes* of his works; but in the perfection and beauty of it. Now it adds much to the *beauty* of a *work*, when it is brought forth in a fit season, and is as an apple of gold in a picture of silver. The unlook'd-for concurrence of all circumstances to the production of any great work of God, makes it appear very admirable in our Eyes.

Thirdly, God doth by this means wonderfully glorifie, both his *Power and his Wisdom*, in the Eyes of the men of the World.

1. *His power:* when men see the whole Creation sequacious to his Will and Counsel; that assoon as he begins, and sets out in any work, there is a sudden change in the creature, and all of them follow him in his paths. As the power of a great Prince is herein magnified, all his Subjects possibly are secure and at quiet, and peace, and think nothing of the Prince's counsels: But no sooner doth he set up his Standard, or cause his Drums to be beat up, but presently all his Subjects are in arms, and ready to follow him, upon what designs he pleaseth to lead them. This speaketh now the great power and influence, this Prince hath upon his Subjects. So now, to observe the World as it were all at quiet, and minding no such thing, and God then beginning some great work, and as it were setting up his Standard; and it is no sooner up, but all men flock to it, as if it had been a design laid amongst them. To make it plain by an instance; The whole World almost was in a dead sleep of *Popish-ignorance and superstition*, and in all humane appearance, none thought or dream't of any Reformation: God no sooner proclaimeth his design of *Reformation*, and useth *Luther* to set up his *standard* at *Wittenberg* 1516; it was but by a pitiful *Monk:* but as if this had been a design of a long contrivance in the World, and laid in the several parts of *Germany*, Duke *Frederick* the *Saxon-Elector*, falls in with him; *Franciscus Picus Mirandula*, at *Rome* perswades a Reformation, Marquess *Caracciolus*, and *Bernhardenus Bonifacius*, Marquess of *Oria* turn Confessors at *Naples: Zuinglius* stands up for Reformation in *Switzerland*; *Myconius*, at *Thuring* (I think all in a year) and then other parts in *Germany*, till the Reformation had overspread the greatest part of *Germany*. What a wonderful *Specimen* was this of the power of God upon men, upon the hearts of men in the World? yea, and thus the *Wisdom of God* is wonderfully magnified: for by this means all the World comes to be convinced, that God could not have begun, or done his work in a fitter time. Indeed, God could have done it with equal advantage at any time, having at all times the hearts of *Princes*, and of all men in his hand: but those that do not so wistly consider the influence of God upon mens hearts in the cause, and only view humane circumstances, when they see God bringing forth his work, at a time when the World is prepared and fitted for it, must adore the wisdom of God in it.

Fourthly, God doth by this means check the *haste* and *precipitancy*,

pitancy, and rashness of our spirits, and shew us our own folly. We are very prone to prescribe to God, and to limit the holy One: *Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel* (say the Disciples)? Now when we see God disappointing our hopes and expectations, and bringing forth his work in his own time; when the worlds circumstances fit it, and all things concur to it; then we understand our own folly and rashness, and that our spirits are too hasty; then we see, that if the work of God had been brought forth in our time, it had not been half so easily effected, nor half so beautiful. Methinks here we are like some foolish, ignorant children, that view the Carpenter at work about some goodly frame of an house: the Carpenter you know, doth his work by degrees; first he fitteth one piece, and layeth it by him, then another, and so a third: The child vieweth this, and not understanding the contrivance, he is every day crying to his father to set it up; *Father, when do you set up the house*? shall it not go up this day? to morrow, *&c* The child thinks that there is nothing to do, but to set up this piece, or that piece: but his wiser Father, knows that he must have every piece fitted and prepared, the joints and the tenons ready to couple one piece to another; or it would be to no purpose to begin to set up the building, before it were framed, and one part coupled to the other: The child at last, when he seeth his Father set it up all, and the parts fitted one to another, then it begins to see its self a fool, and to understand that its Father was wiser than it; against another time it learneth wit, to let the Father alone to his own wisdom, time, and contrivance. The Father might have lost his pains, and spoiled some pieces of good timber, and done nothing else, in sooner hearkning to the childs importunity. It may be the child in its haste, hoists up a piece of timber, but it falls down upon him, and bruiseth him, *&c.* It is much the same case with us: we look for a *Reformation*, we believe God will *sit as a Refiner upon Zion*; we cannot let God alone to his own time, till he hath fitted the world's circumstances to his design; but it may be we are *hastening of God*, not only by modest prayers, submitted to his will (which is our duty), but by murmurings and repinings at God: It may be we, like the hasty child, are *hoisting up some pieces of timber*, encouraging some or other to begin it irregularly; and by that means get nothing but a knock, or a bruise, and lose such Instruments as might have been

useful. But at last, we see God bring forth his work, the world is (as to its circumstances) fitted to it: then we see our folly. *David* was anointed to the Kingdom of *Israel* and *Judah*; after this, he is called to Court, he is made the Kings son-in-law: If any one upon this should have made a party for *David*, to have rent the Kingdom from *Saul* (a defensive party he indeed had to protect him from *Sauls* rage, but no more), he had undoubtedly but made himself a prey. But *David* waiteth year after year, till God had fitted the circumstances of that Kingdom to his design: till *Saul* and *Jonathan* were gone, and the peoples hearts were inamoured, and set upon *David*, and the Captain of the Army was turned also to him; and when these circumstances concurred, then he brings forth his great work, and setteth his Servant *David* peaceably upon the Throne promised unto him. Thus far I have enlarged upon the Explicatory part of this Observation: I now come to the Application of it.

Use 1. In the first place, *Let us learn from hence, to adore the wisdom of God, in his great productions of Providence.* There is much, very much of God to be seen, in his great products of Providence: but he is to be seen in them, in nothing more than this, his adapting and fitting the world to his designs. With how much blood must *David* have come to the Kingdom, the children of *Israel* been brought out of *Egypt* and *Babylon*, had it not been for this? Oh, the infinite, unsearchable wisdom of God! his footsteps are not known, his ways are past a creature's finding out. Wisdom in action is then much seen, when the action is not attempted, but at such a time as it takes effect. The wisdom of the Smith teacheth him to strike, when the Mettal is hot and malleable. The wise General opens not his trenches, till all is ready to make the Sally, or assault: nor springs the Mine, till it be carried right under the wall. Herein is the infinite wisdom of God seen, that he attempts not a great work, until he hath accommodated circumstances to it.

Use 2. Secondly, *Observe from hence; That the miscarrying of a good design, must be the product of mans improvidence; not of Gods directive Providence.* There are many instances might be given of mens miscarrying in a good design, that is, in the attempt of things which God will certainly bring to pass. How many have perished, in their undertakings of works of Reformation, their works miscarried? The Providence of God, is not in-

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deed excluded out of these events: it permitted those persons so to act, it governed their action: But it was their own ungrounded zeal and sinful passions, and undue precipitancy that caused their miscarriage. God's effective Providence never miscarrieth in its designs; for it always, either produceth a thing by an almighty-Power, miraculously; or else so fitteth the worlds circumstances afore-hand, that if it be to be done mediately, it is certainly produced. It is only mans haste and mis-guided zeal, that makes any good work abortive. By a good work here, I understand, whatsoever is made the Object of a Divine Promise; and (by the way) this may teach us, not to let go our hold on the Promise, upon any such disaster. If the work be of God, if it be any thing which God hath promised, it shall be effected, though it may miscarry in a first, or second undertaking; either because the Providence of God is driving another design, *viz.* in the accomplishment of it, first to punish some undertakers in it for their sins, which was the case of the *Israelites* against *Benjamin*, and against *Ai*; or for their *precipitancy*, and rash setting upon it out of Gods time; or their ill-managery of it: yet let not your faith fail in the Promise, for the work shall revive in Gods time, when he hath fitted the Worlds circumstances a little better to it; it shall go on. But thirdly,

Use 3. Let me call upon you to *Observe* this in Gods providential Dispensations, both towards the Church, and towards your own Souls in particular: *Whoso is wise, observeth these things* (saith the Text), and *he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* This is a very observable thing, it will make us spiritually wise, it will make us to understand much of the Lords loving-kindness, in the products of his Providence. 1. I say first, it will *give us spiritual wisdom, and in a great measure make us to understand Gods time for the production of his great works; and very much guide us, as to our duty in the use of means: what, and of what nature is seasonable, and proper for us to make use of.* For Example, There is a great expectation of the *Conversion of the Jews*; whether the whole Body of them shall be converted, or no, and whether they shall return to *Jerusalem*, and again build, and inhabit, that once holy City, I cannot say: But the Scripture seemeth to incline very much, That there shall be a far greater conversion of them, and calling of them in, than yet hath been.

been. But to look for this suddenly, or to fix it upon any certain year, must needs be a very great, an idle and groundless vanity: we must first see the Worlds circumstances much better fitted to it, than we yet do; whilst either the lives, or blasphemies of the *Jews* are such, as it is not reasonable that Christian Princes should endure them in their Territories; or the spirits of Christians are such, as they will not so endure them, or such Idolatries and Superstitions are amongst Christians, as are abomination to that people: the circumstances of the World do not seem fitted to the production of such a great and noble work. If we should live to see the bitterness of the Jews against Christ abated, and the bitterness of Christians Spirits against them more generally allayed; The lives, and worship of Christians more reformed from such superstitions as they abominate, and the lives of the *Jews* more reduced to rules of Christians; we might then hope for something of this nature, and judg Gods time at hand. To give another instance: *Protestants* do believe, or at least did (till of late some have began to doubt it) That the Pope of *Rome* was the great Antichrist: That wicked one, of whom the Apostle prophecied, 2 *Thess.* 2. 8, *that should be revealed, whom God would consume with the spirit of his mouth, and with the brightness of his coming:* He it is, *ver.* 4, *who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.* The mysterie of his iniquity began to work, even in the Apostle's time, though there was none of many years after owned the name of *Pope*; or arrogant title of *Universal Bishop*, or *Vicar of Christ*, &c. But the Apostle, *ver.* 6, tells us, there was something which then *hindered his being revealed, and would let, until he should be taken away.* The *Roman Empire* hindered, nor is that hinderance yet taken away. 'Tis true, there is but a stump of that Empire remaining in *Germany*, *Spain*, *France*, *England*, many other great boughs are lop'd off it; but most of them kept their Antichristian favour, though they changed their temporal *Lords*, and set up for, and by themselves, as to temporal subjection and dominion. You see and hear how fierce, the *French*, the *Spaniards*, the *Portugals*, &c. the house of *Austria*, are for the *Romish* Religion. 'Tis true, *England* hath broke that yoke off its neck; so hath *Holland:* the Gospel hath got a great foot in *Germany*, *France*, *Denmark*, *Poland*, *Sweden*, *Hungary*; but yet the Devil hath

hath a large Chappel in most of those places. It is the National Religion of *France*, *Spain*, *Portugal*, *Italy*, the *Imperial Proper-territories*. God is fitting the circumstances of the World, much to his promised Work; of destroying this *Antichrist with the spirit of his mouth, with the brightness of his coming*. *England* is fallen off, *Holland* is fallen off, a great part of *Switzerland*, many Cities and Territories in *Germany*, *Sweden*, and *Denmark*; great numbers in *France*. God is by degrees doing his work, and a great deal is done within the space of a hundred and fifty years last past (for it is no longer since *Luther* began to shake his Throne): but yet the circumstances of the World do not look, as if it were like to be a work we should see in our age; nor it may be our childrens children. Methinks the Scripture looks, as if that *man of sin* should die *a natural death*, not a *violent one*. I mean, that that Religion should be loathed out of the World, not fought out of it; God will consume it *with the Spirit of his mouth, and with the brightness of his coming: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit* (saith the Lord). I tell you but my judgment, that before the fall of Antichrist, you must yet see a greater falling off from Popery, by the Princes of other Nations and their people. The Worlds circumstances do not yet seem fitted to that great Work: God may work Miracles in the case, but I know no ground we have to expect them. I am very confident that Antichrist is in his wane, much past his full, declining every day; and therefore the fears of some, that that ridiculous Religion should again over-spread *England*, or *Holland*, or any other reformed Church, do not much afflict me: I take that for granted, that *Babylon* is *falling*; but when we shall hear that joyful sound, *Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen*, that I cannot tell you: but in the general I think, we must first see the World otherwise circumstanced than it is.

2. By this observation of the *motions of Providence*, you shall also *understand much of Gods set time, as to shewing mercy to your own particular soul*: viz. *when your bodily, or spiritual circumstances are fitted for the desired mercy*.

1. I say *first*, *when your bodily circumstances are fitted to it*. There is nothing more evident, than the dependance of our minds upon our bodies, and the influence that some bodily distempers (especially) have upon our souls and minds: now although it be true, that God can work miraculously, and by light can break

break through a darkneſs, be it never ſo thick, and raviſh a Soul with unſpeakable joy and peace, though at that time it be yoked to a dark, cloudy, melancholick, diſturbed body: yet God uſeth not to work Miracles ordinarily, but to move in a more ordinary courſe of Providence, by the uſe and application of means that are proper: ſo that as it is ſeldom, but God uſeth the diſorders and diſturbances of the body, to influence and afflict the mind, and to be (at leaſt an adjuvant) cauſe, when he will trouble a Soul: ſo he uſually reſtoreth health, and a better conſtitution of body, when he intends to reſtore peace and quiet, and a compoſure of ſpirit; I ſay, ordinarily he doth ſo. And hence again in the next place,

3. We by giving attendance to this Obſervation, may learn *our duty in reference to the uſe of Means*, ſo as to uſe what is proper to its ſeaſon: for there is great wiſdom to be uſed in apportioning means. For Example: as to the *bringing down of Antichriſt*, if *Gods time be not come*, the means are not, *girding our ſwords upon our thighs*, &c. (I queſtion whether that will ever be a Mean proper to be uſed in that caſe); but endeavouring by all means poſſible, to loath the World of Popiſh ſuperſtitions and ceremonies, and all the idolatry of that Synagogue, and of all the cheats they put upon the World, and alienate the hearts of people from them. So for *calling the Jews*: the means to be uſed is not inciting them to get into a body, and heading them, *&c.* but to convince them of their errours, to endeavour the ſweetning of their ſpirits, the enlightning their minds with the knowledg of the truth of the Goſpel; and reconciling them to the Chriſtian Religion, and ſhewing them the Examples of an holy life and converſation. So in caſe of particular Souls, where the diſcompoſure of the mind, is originated in, or further advantaged by bodily diſtempers (which is a thing very frequently happening); I do not take it to be the duty of a Chriſtian, meerly to pray and hear, but alſo to uſe natural means proper for the abating of theſe diſtempers: yet not this, without Prayer and uſe of Ordinances, both for the bleſſing of God upon ſuch means, and for the further influences of his ſupernatural grace; for God fitteth the circumſtances of the perſon that is to receive the mercy, to the deſired mercy, when he intendeth the beſtowing of it; as well as the circumſtances of the World, to the mercy which in his ſet-time he intendeth for his Church: ſo, as I ſay, this obſerving of

this method of Providence duly attended to, addeth spiritual Wisdom to a Christian, as in *discerning* of *Gods time* for mercy; so also in directing him to his duty, as to proper means to be used by him in the way of his duty, in order to the obtaining of the mercy; teaching him to know, *what Israel ought to do:* what a good Christian ought to do under the circumstances, under which God hath brought him.

2. By an attendance to this working of Providence, you shall understand *much of the loving-kindness of the Lord*; very much of the goodness and love of God to Nations and Churches, is seen in this his fitting of the worlds circumstances to his designs, before he produceth them; as his designs are effected without *tumult and bloodshed, which otherwise through mens opposition to it, would not be avoided.* With how much *bloodshed* (in all humane probability) must the Children of *Israel* have first came out of *Egypt*, then out of *Babylon*, had not God fitted the circumstances of the world, to those designs of his Providence? Who could have imagined, either the first Plantation of Gospel-Doctrine and Churches, or the after-reformation of it, when Popery had everywhere obscured it, had not God by an infinitely-wise Providence, first fitted the circumstances of the world to his own works? To give you an instance, so late, that it is in most of your memories. The Restauration of our present Soveraign, was a great work of Providence; had not God fitted the circumstances of the three Nations for such a work, with how much tumult, confusion, and blood-shed must it have been effected? It were easie to make the same observation of particular Providences, relateing to our selves; we shall find that God brings forth his works in their seasons, and his season is always such as the Wit and Wisdom of Man, had it been to chuse, could not have chosen a fitter: *He maketh every thing beautiful in his time* (saith *Solomon*). Indeed this is all the beauty of Providence (almost) which we discern: Beauty in persons lyes much in *symmetry, or proportion of parts, and mixture of colours:* There is a Beauty of Providence, that lyes in the symmetry and proportion of it to the revealed Will and Promises of God: but the further beauty of Providence lyeth in the seasonableness of it, and the fittedness of Gods work to the circumstances of the world, or of our persons at that time, when he produceth it.

And herein we understand much of the loving-kindness of God. But I shall add no more to this Observation.

SERMON XX.

Psalm CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I Am going on in making some special Observations concerning the motions of Divine Providence: Five I have already made and discoursed, I proceed now to a sixth.

Observ. 6. *It usually subordinateth the civil affairs of the world, to the Religious concerns of his Church.*

1. The world was of old divided into the *circumcision*, and the *uncircumcision*, that is, *Jews* and *Gentiles*: The *Jews* which were the circumcision, made the visible Church, until Christ's ascension, or at least until he came in the flesh. Since it hath been divided into *Jews*, *Christians*, and *Heathens*; I speak not meerly of the name *Christians*, (that I know was first given the Disciples of Christ at *Antioch*): but I understand under that notion, such as own Jesus Christ, and the Doctrine of his Gospel: these make up the New-Testament-Church, the Gospel-Church: the whole number of them makes up the *Church Catholick visible*. Those of them in this or that Nation, make up the visible Church in such a Nation. Indeed a *particular Organical-Church* can consist of no more than so many, as have either explicitly or implicitly agreed to walk together under the charge and inspection of such or such Officers.

2. But

2. But there is a *world* amongſt Chriſtians, as well as amongſt Heathens; all Hypocrites, and ſeeming Profeſſors, who are carnal, and ſavour nothing but earthly things, make up this world: which is oppoſed to the *inviſible Church*, which is reſtrained to the number of true and real Saints, who glory not in appearance, but in truth and reality. Now this Church of God, is that which God hath ſet his love upon above all other people in the world.

1. *The firſt and great objects of his love, are thoſe whom he hath choſen in Chriſt before the foundation of the world*, and for whom in time Chriſt dyed, and whom God hath effectually called, and tranſlated out of darkneſs into marvelous light. Theſe are thoſe whom God hath ſet a-part for himſelf, *Pſal.* 4. 3. *A choſen generation, a royal prieſthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, to ſhew forth the praiſes of him, who hath called them out of darkneſs, into marvellous light.*

2. *Next to theſe is the whole body of the viſible Church. To the body of the Jews appertained the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promiſes*, Rom. 9. 4, 5. And, as the Scripture mentioneth divers priviledges which were peculiar to the *Jews*, and are to the Church; *as to have the Oracles of God, the Word and Sacraments*; *ſo doubtleſs there are many promiſes which relate to the whole body of the Church*, which argue Gods peculiar kindneſs to that body of people. Whether it be, becauſe God hath more honour from them, than from *Pagans*, or for the ſake of his inviſible Church which is amongſt them, I ſhall not undertake to determine, certain it is that the thing is ſo. Now the Obſervation which I make, is but a further evidence of this love, that God by his Providence diſpoſeth and governeth the affairs of the world, in a juſt ſubordination to the good of his Church; and to thoſe wiſe ends, which with reference to that he is bringing about: and this is true, both in reference to the *Pagan* world, and the *Chriſtian* world; according to the deſign which God hath, by which he doth deſign to do good to his *whole Church*; ſo he diſpoſeth and governeth the affairs of the *Pagan world*. And according to the deſign God hath, by which he deſigns to bring about good to the ſincere Servants of God in any place; ſo he diſpoſeth, ordereth and governeth the affairs of ungodly men, amongſt whom they live.

This will appear by a twofold Obſervation, which you ſhall make:

1. *Concerning the variety of the ſame people's ſpirits.*
2. *Concerning the variety of their actions.*

1. *As to the variety of the ſame people's ſpirits*, with reference to the Church of God, and thoſe eſpecially in it, that walk more fully and cloſe with God. It is matter of aſtoniſhment to thoſe who do not wiſtly conſider *the wheel within the wheel, or the ſpirit of the living God within the wheels*, upon which all the great actions of the world do turn: the world is ſometimes all in an uproar againſt thoſe they nickname *Puritans*, that is, ſuch as *exerciſe themſelves to keep a good conſcience, both towards God, and towards men*, (for that is the true deſcription of ſuch a perſon); and if profane and carnal men hate ſome that are otherwiſe in their Converſation, it is but their miſtake, for they think them ſo; holineſs and ſtrict walking, is the thing they hate, revile, and maligne: *If you were of the world* (ſaith our Saviour) *the world would love its own; but becauſe you are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*, John 15. 19. ſometimes again the ſcene is quite altered, that of the Prophet *Zechariah* is fulfilled: *Ten men take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew*, ſaying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that the Lord is with you*: men ſtand amazed at this. The People of God are the ſame, walk in the ſame method of Converſation: but the hand of God is in the thing. Sometimes God deſigneth in his external Providence to ſmile upon his people, and give them ſome breathing-time, a few halcion-days; then they ſhall find favour in the eyes of the great men of the Earth, and of their leſſer neighbours: another time he deſigneth to ſcourge and chaſten his people, then every ones ſpirit ſhall be up, and their tongues let looſe againſt them. Thus it was with the *Iſraelites*, Gods ancient people, *Exod.* 11. 7. *But againſt any of the children of Iſrael, ſhall not a dog move his tongue.* The *Pſalmiſt* telleth us, *Pſal.* 105. 23, 24. *That Iſrael came into Egypt, and Jacob ſojourned in the land of Ham, and he increaſed his people greatly, and made them ſtronger than their enemies*, Verſ. 25. *He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal ſubtilly with his ſervants.*

Zech. 8. 23.

2. *The great variety of actions in the world, doth alſo demonſtrate this.* In the 12th of the *Revelations* you have, as Divines think, ſhewed

ſhewed unto *John* the ſtate of the Goſpel-Church, there repreſented under the notion of a *woman cloathed with the Sun, having the Moon under her feet, travelling, and in pain.* The Devil and his inſtruments, the Enemies of the Church, ſet out under the notion of a great *Red Dragon*, Verſ. 3. *Having ſeven heads, and ten horns, and ſeven crowns: This Dragon was caſt unto the earth*, and there *ver.* 13. *He perſecuted the woman, who had the wings of an Eagle given her, by which ſhe fled into the wilderneſs, where ſhe was nouriſhed for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the ſerpent*, verſ. 15. *The ſerpent caſt out of his mouth water, as a flood after the woman, that he might cauſe her to be carried away off the flood.* Now verſ. 16. it is ſaid, *That the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and ſwallowed up the flood, which the Dragon caſt out of his mouth.* Very good Interpreters, by the Earth there underſtand, *Homines terrenos, per quos, ſæpe aliud agentes, Deus Eccleſiam ſuam mirabiliter protexit*; The men of the Earth, by whom (though they intend no ſuch thing) God often wonderfully protecteth his Church. God ſometimes deſigneth to ſcourge and chaſten his people for their ſins, then all the world is in arms againſt them; ſometimes again, he deſigneth to increaſe his Church, and give them further ground to enlarge their Territories, and increaſe their borders: he then accordingly diſpoſeth the ſpirits of the men of the world: and the truth is, the various complexion of thoſe Nations in the world, that are Enemies to the Goſpel of Chriſt, and of thoſe perſons, that are certain Enemies to the power and practice of Godlineſs, is a thing, of which an account can hardly be given by him, that doth not conſider this; That God hath a people in the world, that are dear unto him, and with whom in the wiſdom of his Providence he dealeth diverſly, ſometimes exalting, and lifting them up; another time humbling them, and keeping them low, and with relation to theſe he governs the hearts and actions of Princes, and great men, and of the lower ſort of men alſo; ſubordinating the affairs of the world to his deſigns, with reference to theſe people. God hath a deſign to multiply the ſeed of *Jacob*, according to his promiſe; though there be a famine in *Canaan*, it ſhall not deſtroy them; his Providence directeth one of that family to be ſold into *Egypt*, to become a great man there, to ſave much people alive, to give them reſt, and a time to multiply there peaceably,

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in no capacity to shew themselves such hinderers of this, as probably they otherwise would have been: The *Romans* were a great while more careless in the matters of Religion; while the Gospel continued in *Judea*, it made little noise in the world, and was looked upon but as a division amongst the *Jews* in matters of Religion: in which the great masters of the world concerned not themselves so much; and when the Apostles first carried the Gospel amongst the Heathens, it was at first little taken notice of, while the Christians grew very numerous; so as ten persecutions, succeeding one another, could not root them out; and the same thing you shall constantly observe in any great works of Providence relating to the Church. It could not have been thought, that *Germany* and *France* should have so easily fallen in with the carrying on of the Reformation, if the Providence of God had not first fitted the world for it, by the complexion of Princes, the diversity of their interests, by suffering the ignorance and sottishness of the Popish-Clergy, together with their covetousness, ambition and debauchery, to grow to that heighth, that they grew an abomination to all men.

And as it is in the Political and Ecclesiastical body, so it is as to the particular persons of Christians; the Providence of God (ordinarily) disposeth the body, according to the work which he hath to do upon the soul. But that is more forreign to my observation, therefore I shall not inlarge upon it. Besides that I spake something to it under the former observation, which hath some cognation with this, this only differing from it in this, shewing you, that the Providence of God doth not make the Church lacquey to the world, but he makes the world lacquey to the Church; and subordinateth the business of the world to his own great designs, relating to the Church. Now if you ask me the reason of this, it doubtless lyeth,

Reas. *In the peculiar favour of God, to that people in the world, which bear the name of his Church.* You have an expression, *Psal.* 87. 2. *The Lord loveth the gates of Sion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Sion* was the place, at the foot of which the Temple was built, where all the worship which God had in the world performed according to his will was performed: *The tabernacle in Shiloh was forsaken*, Psal. 78. 60. God hath a particular kindness for any place, for any persons, amongst whom his

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Reaſ. *In the peculiar favour of God, to that people in the world, which bear the name of his Church.* You have an expreſſion, *Pſal.* 87. 2. *The Lord loveth the gates of Sion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.* *Sion* was the place, at the foot of which the Temple was built, where all the worſhip which God had in the world performed according to his will was performed: *The tabernacle in Shiloh was forſaken*, Pſal. 78. 60. God hath a particular kindneſs for any place, for any perſons, amongſt whom his

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true worſhip is, and where he hath placed to himſelf a Tabernacle; though God had a kindneſs for the whole ſeed of *Jacob*, yet he loved the *gates of Sion* above all *the dwellings of Jacob*, becauſe that was the place where his worſhip was regularly performed. It holds ſtill under the New Teſtament, and will hold to the end of the world; whereſoever God hath a Church, or people, he hath a particular kindneſs for that people: they are in Scripture called the *houſe of God*. God is ſaid to dwell, and walk amongſt them; and God hath yet a more particular favour to thoſe that are the inviſible part of the viſible Church; I mean ſuch as truly belong unto God, *that worſhip him in ſpirit, and in truth; that fear the Lord, and hope in his mercies*, as the Pſalmiſt expreſſeth it, *Pſal.* 33. 18. All the world is nothing to God, in compariſon of this little flock, to whom it is his will to give a Kingdom: He hath given them his Chriſt, and ſhall he not with him give them all things? This were eaſily to be proved to you from a variety of Scripture, and arguments drawn from thence. Now ſuppoſing this, it is no wonder if he ſubordinateth his works in the world, to his deſigns here: This is that *Canaan* which the Lord careth for, and upon which his eyes are from one end of the year to another, *Deut.* 11. His heritage, the dearly beloved of his ſoul, *Jer.* 12. 7. His peculiar treaſure, his ſiſter, his ſpouſe, the redeemed and ranſomed of the Lord, his portion; in ſhort, there is a multitude of expreſſions, by which God hath ſhewen that his Church, the whole body of people owning and profeſſing him; and eſpecially thoſe of them, that worſhip him in ſpirit and truth, and walk up to the rule of his word, are dearer to him than all the world beſides. He calls them his bride, *Rev.* 21. 9. His beloved, *Pſal.* 108. 6. His building, 1 *Cor.* 3. 9. His City, *Heb.* 12. 22. His choſen generation, 1 *Pet.* 2. 9. His family, *Eph.* 3. 15. His husbandry, 1 *Cor.* 3. 9. His Kingdom, the lot of his inheritance.^ Now conſidering this, it is no wonder at all, that the Providence of God ſhould manage all the affairs of the world, in ſubordination to his deſigns, for the good of this body. All the relation of God to others, is but that of a *Creator*; and they are no better than the ſynagogues of Satan, as to the Divine Worſhip that is in them: and the throne of Satan, with reſpect to the homage of their Converſation: They are called *children of wrath*, of *diſobedience*, of the *curſe*, *ſtrangers*, and *forreiners*. If God ſometimes gives

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^ The riches of His glory. Eph. 1. 18.

up his people into the hands of wicked men, it is either, 1. *For his peoples good, to purge away their droſs, and take away their tinn* (as the Prophet expreſſeth it), *or for to ripen ſinners for their deſtruction*, that they may by it *fill up the meaſure of their iniquities*. Methinks you have a full proof of this Obſervation, in the 105 Pſalm: the Pſalmiſt in that Pſalm, is calling the Church of the *Jews* to give thanks unto the Lord, to ſing unto him, to talk of all his wondrous works. Then followeth a recapitulation of thoſe great things which God had done for them; amongſt which, this is reckoned, that he ſubordinated his motions of Providence amongſt the men, and the nations of the world, to his gracious deſigns for them; *Verſ.* 14. *He ſuffered no man to do them wrong; yea he reproved Kings for their ſake; ſaying, Touch not mine anointed, do my prophets no harm*; and ſo he goes on, almoſt quite through that Pſalm. Now I ſay, the reaſon of all this was, his love ſet upon this people. As moſt of us have ſome particular perſons, that our heart is moſt ſet upon; ſome particular intereſt and deſign that we drive on: now whoever thoſe perſons be, or whatever that deſign be, we make all the reſt of our actions to be ſubordinate to that. So the great God having ſet up his glory as his great intereſt and deſign, and ſet apart him and them that are godly for himſelf; it is no wonder at all if he ruleth all the world, and governeth all the affairs of it, in ſubordination to this great intereſt, and the good of this people. I now come to the Application of this Obſervation.

Uſe 1. In the firſt place (as I ſaid before upon the other Obſervation, ſo I ſay here): *From hence a wiſe and obſerving Chriſtian, may in a great meaſure know, what weather it is like to be in the Climate of the Church:* How it is like to fare with them that are the People of God. They are, and always were the far leſſer part of the world; and their quiet and tranquillity (to look with a rational eye) doth much depend upon the complexion of the men of the world, and their inclinations: if God intends a calm and tranquillity to the Church, he uſually ſo ordereth the world, that the *earth helps the woman*, the men of the world, either out of good nature, or (which indeed moſtly is the buſineſs) out of intereſt, ſhew them kindneſs. Hence you ſhall obſerve, that when God intendeth the tranquillity and proſperity of the Church, his Providence (ordinarily) bringeth one of theſe things to paſs.

1. *He sometimes raiseth up some eminent servant of his, to do great services for the men of the world*: this you see in the case of *Joseph*, God had designed the *Jews* a prospering, multiplying time in the land of *Egypt*: he raiseth up *Joseph*, makes him a Privy-Counsellor to *Pharaoh*, yea the second man in *Egypt*; and this by endowing him with a power to interpret *Pharaohs* dream, so he came to be a great man, and was a protection to the Church of God for many years in *Egypt*. So when they were in the Captivity of *Babylon*, we do not read, that besides their Captivity, and their want of their worship at *Hierusalem*, their condition was very sad; but in the peace of that Countrey, they had peace, yet they were amongst Heathens and Idolaters: but the Providence of God raised up *Daniel* and the *three Children*, and by giving them great Wisdom, and some miraculous deliverances of them, he brought them into a great credit; and *Daniel* was made first President over 120 Provinces. God designed afterwards the *Jews* peaceable building of the Temple, and enjoyment of their own land; his Providence brings *Esther* (one of them) to be Queen, makes use of *Mordecay* to discover a great treason, and by this means brings these two eminent friends to his Church, into great reputation. The like might be parallel'd all along in story, and may be every day observed: but the Scripture-instances are enough.

2. *Sometimes the Providence of God makes the Earth to help the woman, by making his people the ballance to the clashing interests of the men of the world*: and this is a very ordinary method of Divine Providence. The men of the world are not always friends one with another; if they were (in humane probability) the Church would quickly be swallowed up. But their lusts will not suffer them always to agree, and then the Providence of God (ordinarily) maketh his Church the ballance: and so they obtain peace and protection, either by a *neutrality*, not engaging on either side, or by strengthening the weaker party against the stronger, where the case is such, that they can do it with consistency to their duty to God, and religious principles. *David* with his little company, upon this account doubtless, was protected by the King of the *Philistines* a while.

3. *Sometimes the Providence of God raiseth up his people to such a considerableness, as to the commerce and trade of a Nation; that they cannot be rooted out, without cutting the sinews of a nation,*

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and breaking the strength of it. The Prince (who *Solomon* saith is served by the field) is concerned as to his revenue; the poor are highly concerned as to their employment and livelihood; it may be many of the maddest of their Enemies are concerned; for there is a strange twisting of all mens interests in the trade and commerce of a Nation. This is another way by which the Providence of God helpeth and maketh the earthy part of the world to help the *Woman* his Church.

4. Sometimes the Providence of God suffers the maddest Enemies of his people, to run out to such strange *extravagancies* of *oppression*, and *injustice*, of *folly*, and *superstition* in worship, of *looseness* and *debauchery* in morals; that the soberer part of men, though no great friends to the practice and power of godliness, yet is not able to bear them, but chuse rather to take the part of them with whom they agree better in matters of civil justice, and sobriety, and temperance, though not at all better in matters of true Religion and Godliness. This was the very case in the beginning of Reformation, both in *Germany*, and other places: The Providence of God having designed a better time for the true worshippers of him, had so ordered it in his great Wisdom, that the Church-men of the Popish party, had made themselves a just abomination to all sober persons; the generality of their watch-men were such as they were in *Israel* and *Judah*, just before their ruin described, *Isa.* 56. 10. *His watch-men are blind, they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, that cannot bark, sleeping, loving to slumber; yea they are greedy dogs, that can never have enough; and shepheards that cannot understand, they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter: Come you, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill our selves with strong drink, and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.* Just such a Clergy they had in *Germany*, and in *England*, and other parts too before the reformation. Some learned men they had, but they (for the most part) spent their studies and pains about trifles in Divinity, subtil school-niceties and distinctions, signifying nothing to mens salvation: the generality of them were drunken sots, and debauched persons, *dumb dogs that could not bark*; neither pray, nor preach, nor say any thing (almost) beyond what they had in their mass-books; but thought to have carried all before them, with the forms of a few latine Prayers, their Albes and Stoles, and Levitical habits, *&c.* yea and

they were *greedy dogs* too, never thinking they had enough. This was that ruined them, their ſelling men *pardons* for a ſum of money, every one looking for his tythes and oblations, but none regarding peoples ſouls. And by the way, obſerve this, *A generally debauched, ignorant, ſottiſh, cruel Clergy, is a certain ſign, either of an approaching ruin to that nation, or to that party, by a reformation of the nation.* To the *Jews* it was a prognoſtick of an approaching ruin: *All you beaſts of the field come to devour, yea all you beaſts of the forreſt* (ſaith the Prophet), *his watchmen are blinded*, &c. Upon the reformation from Popery, it was a prognoſtick of reformation, and indeed ſo it is ordinarily, where there is not *like people, like prieſts*. But God keepeth up in any conſiderable number of people, an abomination and hatred of thoſe Prieſts, and their courſes; but where they fall in with them, applaud, patronize them, and theſe are the men they are for, *The interpretation be to thoſe that hate that people.*

So that I ſay, from hence obſerving Chriſtians may make a great judgment, how it is likely to go with the Church: you muſt lay down this for a principle, *That no wicked men have any hearty love and affection for thoſe that are the people of God.* There is an Enmity which God hath put betwixt the ſeed of the woman, and the ſeed of the ſerpent, and nothing but grace will wear it out; beſides, they ſee themſelves ſhamed, and condemned every day by their contrary converſation. It is only the intereſt of the men of the world, that gives them any breathing-time, and maketh the *earth to help the woman.* So that if at any time you can but make up a judgment, from what quarter the the wind blows for the men of the worlds intereſt, you may go a great way to determine, how at ſuch a time it is like to fare with the Church and People of God: for God ordinarily ſubordinates his government of the world, to his deſigns with reference to his Church. If there happens to be ſuch a juncture of affairs, that the People of God are few in any place, like a gleaning of grapes after a vintage, or an Olive-berry or two upon the top-boughs; there is little good to be hoped for, unleſs God by his Providence makes ſome particular perſons amongſt them highly ſerviceable, or inſtrumental in the ſtate where they live; either diſcovering ſome plots or treaſons (which was the caſe in *Mordecai's* time), or brings ſome of them to ſome great favour, which was the cauſe of the *Iſraelites* firſt in *Egypt*, then

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in *Babylon*, and *Eſther* afterwards upon their return from *Babylon*; *or elſe God by his Providence ſecureth his little flock, by ſuffering ſome inteſtine factions to riſe amongſt the men of the world, or ſtirring up other enemies againſt that part of the world,* that they have ſomething elſe to do, and cannot attend the execution of their malice upon the ſervants of God: or bleſſeth a particular ſtate with a good-natured Prince, that is not enclined to rigour and ſeverity, but naturally abhorreth the blood and ruin of people: though uſually, if the latter be the caſe, it is but an incertain time with the Church; for good natures are ordinarily with eaſe enclined this way or that, according to the mutability of prevailing Counſels.

But now if the People of God in any nation be a conſiderable number, and you ſee the Providence of God hath raiſed them up, to be men of intereſt many of them, either with reſpect to their Wiſdom, or Eſtates, or Imployments; though their Enemies be many and boiſterous, yet there is no great fear (unleſs of particular perſons ſuffering): God ſeems to have ſubordinated the world to their peace. For though ſome few imprudent men, that are raſh and malicious, and ſome hot-ſpur'd Church-men, who underſtand little of politicks, may in ſuch a juncture be for nothing but fire and faggot: yet God, who in his Providence hath ordered civil affairs ſo, that it ſhould be the intereſt of the men of the world to give them liberty and peace, will ſeldom ſuffer thoſe whom he hath betruſted with the government of the affairs of the world (unleſs he deſigneth to bring a period to the ſtate) ſo far to overlook their intereſts, as to gratifie the luſts of malicious and raſh men.

Again, If you ſee in any place, God ſuffering men calling themſelves Miniſters, to degenerate into ſuch ſots in their Converſation, or to run into ſuch heighths of ſuperſtitious vanities and fooleries, as all men condemn and ſee the vanity of; or to be ſo inſufficient for any part of their work, that they can do nothing of it, but are contemptible unto all, and make the offering of God to be abhorred: This is another juncture of affairs, when you may either fear the ruin of the place, or hope for a reformation, or more quiet abode for Gods People in it. And (by the way) my enlargement upon this Obſervation, may mind the People of God of the Policy, as well as Piety of a threefold duty.

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1. The first is, *All just homage and serviceableness unto such rulers as God hath set over the places wherein their lot is cast:* I say just homage, *for it is better to obey God than Man*; and we cannot obey Man, where Obedience to him is disobedience to God. But the more any of our consciences towards God straitens us, as to some points of Obedience, the more we should be serviceable in what we may. If it at any time falls in our way to secure their lives, by discovering dangerous plots and conspiracies; *Mordecay* by such a service, made himself the Protector of all the people of the *Jews*. If we be called to it, and can assist them with our arms, with our wisdom, counsel, with our service and industry; remember what great instruments for the good of Gods People, *Joseph*, *Daniel*, the three Children, *Nehemiah*, &c. were made.

2. Observe here *also the Policy, as well as Piety of the practice of all moral virtue: Justice to all, charity and liberality* to the poor, *temperance*, *sobriety*, all manner of lovelineſs in Converſation; there must be something more than these things to commend you to God: but these are the things that must commend you to the world. Moral vertue hath a great cognation with humane Nature: though mens lusts and passions sometimes run them out to acts of injustice, and oppression, and debauchery; yet no body would willingly himself be oppressed, or dealt unjustly with, or have his own wife and daughters debauched. It is very rare but the highest and maddest Enemies of the People of God are malicious and debauched persons; few of them persons of moral vertue and honesty: make but your selves great Examples of these things, and you will certainly at one time or other be too hard for your adversaries; the world so loatheth their injustice, cruelty, oppression, hardheartedness, their drunkenness, and uncleanness, their lying, cheating, and defrauding, that it will vomit them out.

3. It lets you also see the Policy, as well as Piety, of *keeping close to God in the matters of his worship.* The sottishness and superstition of Priests signifieth good, not hurt to you, unless you approve of their savings and doings: *But when the prophets prophecy falsly, and the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so: what will you do in the end thereof?* Jer. 5. 32. If the ministry in any nation be sottish in their lives, corrupt in their Doctrines, superstitious in their Wor-

Worship, dumb dogs, that can neither pray nor preach, *let not the people love to have it so*, and comply with them, and own them. God will not long suffer his flock to be rent in pieces with such wolves, nor be at the will of such idol-shepherds. But I have enlarged far enough upon this first branch of Application, I shall be shorter in the other.

2. Observe from hence both *the felicity and duty of the people of God.* 1. Their *felicity and dignity.*

Their dignity. I remember the Psalmist admiring the mercy of God towards man, and expressing his Dignity, *Psal.* 8. 6,7. *Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep, and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field, the fouls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the seas.* This is a great dignity of man, that God hath subordinated all the works of Creation, all the orders of Creatures beneath him, unto him. But what a dignity is this to which God hath advanced his Church, that all the affairs of the world should be (as it were) *put under their feet*? that they should not only have a dominion over the works of the Lords hands in Creation, as sheep, and neat cattel, and fouls, and fishes, but also all the Lords works of Providence: that the Kingdoms of the Earth, and the great affairs of states should be ruled with reference to the good of this little flock. What a *felicity* it is to be within this hedg, to be a member of this body of people; I mean a true member of the Church of God? I know the whole visible Church (as I have before shewed you) is under a *special Providence:* But it is not to be thought that God should do much for Hypocrites and Formalists: What advantages they have from the Providence of God, they have for the sake of those better servants of God, with whom they are joyned in an external communion. And certainly in the last place, this obligeth all within the Church of God, to a more special duty. Doth God subordinate all his great actions and motions in the world, to his gracious designs and counsels relating to that body of people of which we are a part? Surely then it were but reasonable for us to subordinate all our *little actions in the world, to the honour and glory of God:* Gods glorifying of himself is his great design, he aims at no other end, and it ought also to be our highest design. He

hath choſen a certain people out of the world, and marked them out for himſelf, as the people in whom, and by whom he will be more eſpecially glorified: This people is called *his Church*. God ſubordinateth all his great actions in the world to his gracious deſigns upon, and for theſe; certainly in reaſon, *Whether we eat or drink, or whatſoever we do, we ſhould* (according to the Apoſtles Precept) *do all to the glory of God*. His people are thoſe whom he hath created, whom he hath formed for himſelf; all the world is nothing to God in compariſon of them, they are the dearly beloved of his Soul. What love, reverence, obedience is but reaſonable on our parts towards this great God? What ingratitude muſt it argue on our part, to prefer any thing in deſign or action to the Honour and Glory of this God? We can never live enough unto, nor do enough for that God, who hath done, and doth do ſo much for us. This Obſervation might be many other ways improved, but I ſhall add no more.

SERMON XXI.

Pſal. CVII. 43.

Whoſo is wiſe and will obſerve theſe things, even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

I Proceed yet in making ſome Obſervations upon the motions of Divine Providence. A ſeventh Obſervation I ſhall make, is this:

Obſerv. 7. *It ordinarily enforceth wicked men, who mean nothing leſs, yet to do the Lords work.*

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It is the great art of a Politician to serve himself of every humor: A good Pen-man will write almost with any Pen, and a good work-man will work with any tool; and the great and wise God herein sheweth the greatness of his Wisdom, that he also works with any tools, and doth his business by any instruments. The Stars shall fight in their courses, against *Sizera*; the Sun, and the Moon, against the *Canaanites*; the Frogs, the Lice, and the Flyes against *Pharaoh*; the Earth against *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*. Now in this there shines forth a great deal of Divine Power; thus God sheweth himself to the world, to be the *Lord of hosts*, to have all the hosts of Heaven and Earth at his command. So that as a *great General*, who hath several Regiments under his Command, at his pleasure, he sometimes commandeth out one, sometimes another, as it pleaseth him upon a particular service: so doth our great and mighty God; and as that great Commander, shewing his vast Army to his friend, is reported to have said, there is not one of these, but if I bid him throw himself down a Precipice, or into a River, he will do it; so there is not any company of inanimate, or brute Creatures, not one Company in the whole Army of the Lord of Hosts; but like the *Centurion's* servants, if he saith unto them, Go, they go; if Do this, they do it. But though much of the Wisdom and Power of God be seen in this, yet it is more eminently seen in the use he makes of wicked men, to accomplish his designs, which is a thing very usual in the motions of Divine Providence. As that *Politician* doth most shew his Wisdom, that maketh his Enemies serve him; so God in this doth commend to us his infinite Wisdom, to make use of the Sons of men, that have a perfect hatred and enmity to God, and all his holy designs, that they shall serve him, and accomplish his designs. Now this Observation justifieth it self by a great variety of instances. You have one in holy Writ very plain, *Isa.* 10. 5, 6, 7. *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation: I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them like mire of the streets: Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so.* *Assyria* you see was the Rod of Gods anger: Gods indignation was *his staff*: *Thou couldest do nothing against me*, saith Christ to *Pilate*, *if it were not given thee from above*. He went upon

Gods errand, when he went against Gods People the *Jews*; they had proved an hypocritical people, and God [illegible]termined to make the people, that had been the dearly beloved of his soul, the people of his wrath: God gave him his charge to spoil, to take the prey, to tread down the people. O but how should God perswade the *Assyrian* to serve him? The *Assyrians* were Enemies to the true God; the Text telleth you, *Howbeit he meaneth not so: neither is it in his heart to think so.* He thought of nothing less than serving of Gods design, that which he thought of was plunder and spoyl, and prey for his Soldiers, as the Apostle saith of himself, 2 *Cor.* 12. 16. *Being crafty, I took you by guile*; so we may say of God, being wise, infinitely wise, he took the *Assyrian* by guile; or rather by his infinite wisdom. This is that which the Psalmist saith, *Psal.* 76. 10. *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee*: The wrath of man shall praise God: How can that be! *James* tells us, *That the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*: Well, but for all that it shall praise God; God will make use of their wrath and malice, to bring forth his great designs. Who would ever have thought, that *Pharaoh* the King of *Egypt* should have been a great instrument to have brought the Children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*? Yet he was rather a greater instrument in it than *Moses* was: *Moses* did no more than lead out of *Egypt* a willing people, and sollicit *Pharaoh* to give his consent: *Pharaoh* was Gods instrument to make them willing; he meant nothing less, he saw the people grew great and mighty, *Come on* (saith he) *let us deal wisely* (that is, subtilly) *with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass when there falleth out any war, they joyn also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get themselves out of our land*: here was all he aimed at in his oppressing them, to bring them low, and keep them still under his subjection. Observe how God made use of this. The Children of *Israel* were now seated and settled, and multiplied in a fertile Countrey, and had it not been for the King of *Egypt's* oppressing them, would never have been willing to have left the flesh-pots, and onions, and garlick of *Egypt*: but for this dealing of *Pharaoh* with them, making them to serve with rigour, slaying their male-children, *&c.* This quite tyred them, and made them willing to go out of *Egypt* towards *Canaan*. But let me a little shew

shew you what a variety of lusts in wicked mens hearts, God hath from time to time made use of, to accomplish the great designs of his Providence, with reference to his people: and indeed it is hard to say, what lust in sinners hearts God hath not made use of (at one time or other), and made it to serve the holy and wise designs of his Providence.

1. *The lusts of the eye and flesh*, are of all other the most unmanlike brutish passions; yet the Providence of God hath sometimes taken advantage of these for the glory of God. You all know what a strange influence *Esther's* being advanced to be Queen of *Persia*, had upon Gods design for the building of the second Temple in *Ezra's* time; she was the great instrument to save the whole Church of the *Jews* (the only Church God had upon the Earth at that time) from utter ruin. God made use of the lust of *Ahasuerus* to bring this about; he takes a Teach to *Vashti*, for refusing to come to him, to be shown to his Princes, and turns her away, and then must look for the greatest beauty could be found: *Esther* proveth to be she. What a strange instance of this had we of this in King *Henry* the Eighth of that name in this Nation? Those who know any thing of the story of those times, know, that it was no abhorrence of the Idolatry and Superstition of the Popish-Religion, that set him upon the work of Reformation. After some beginnings of it, the *six Articles* came out: Papists were burnt on one side of *Smithfield*, Protestants on the other: but the King was weary of his Wife, and had a mind to another. His wife indeed was one whom Protestant-Divines judged he could not keep (having been his brothers wife) without a continual living in incest; the Pope (who thinks he can dispense with any thing) he thinks or decrees she was his wife, and would give no dispensation for a divorce; the Popish-Universities, and Divines (who never fail to be on their holy Fathers side) all oppose the King in his desire of change: This angers the King, and was the first motive to his business of Reformation, and casting off the Pope's Supremacy. Nor is this any reproach at all to the Lords work of Reformation amongst us; there's nothing more ordinary, than for God to make the wrath of man to praise him, and make use of the lusts of men, to bring about his own designs.

2. *Ambition is another lust, which fireth the heart of wicked men*, especially great men. It is an excessive desire of *Honour*

and *Dominion*. Poor wretches, born to, and brought up in little circumstances, and low stations in the world, are ordinarily not so much infected with this; it is the great mans lust. God makes an eminent use of this. See it in the case of *Jehu*, a proud ambitious man, that had in him a great lust, and desire of rule and honour; God had a quarrel against the house of *Ahab*, by his Providence he ordereth *Jehu* to the Kingdom, makes use of him to destroy *Joram*, the Son of *Ahab*, and *Ahaziah*, the King of *Judah*, the Son-in law of *Ahab*, and *Jezebel*, *Ahab's* wife, whom God had threatned for the blood of *Naboth*, and his whole Family, until none remained, 2 *Kings* 8. *vers.* 23, 24, 25. *chap.* 9. *vers.* 9, 10, 24, 27, 35, *chap.* 10. *vers.* 7, 11, 17. And thus he delivered his seven thousand in *Israel*, that had not bowed *knee to Baal*, from the idolatry, cruelty, and oppression of a vile and wicked Prince. *Jehu* indeed in all this, pretended a great zeal for God, and did destroy *Baal* from *Israel*, 2 *King.* 10. 28; but yet *ver.* 9. *Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them; to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan.* Vers. 31. *But Jehu took no heed to walk in the way of the Lord God of Israel, with all his heart, for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin.* Hence it was, that though the Lord tells him, 2 *King.* 10. 30. *That he had done well in executing that which was right in the eyes of God, and had done according to all that was in Gods heart, as to the house of Ahab*; and therefore promised him a reward for it, *viz.* that for it, *his children of the fourth generation, should sit on the throne of Israel*; yet God by the Prophet *Hosea* told them, *Hos.* 1. 4. *Yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu:* The business was no more than this. *Jehu* was an ambitious Prince, that loved *honour* and *dominion*, the Providence of God maketh use of this lust of his, to bring about his holy and righteous designs upon that wicked family of *Ahab*, and for the delivery of his people from their oppressions. This was the case of *Haman*, a proud ambitious Courtier in the Court of *Persia*; he had a mind to be great, this made him malice *Mordecay*, he would not bow his knee to him; this made him propose such great things to be done, to the man whom the King should please to shew favour and honour to; the Text tells you he said, *To whom will the*

King

King delight to do honour, more than to my self? God maketh use of his ambition to bring *Mordecay* into honour, and to save the whole people of the *Jews*: and thus it ordinarily falls out in lesser spheres; the humble disposition of Gods People inclining them to give honour, to whom honour belongeth, and not to deny civil respects to the worst of men, doth often commend them to those that are ambitious of honour and respect, and maketh them their friends; God making use of his Enemies ambition for their sake, which by the way commendeth to all that fear God, that Precept of the Apostle, *Rom.* 13. 7. *Render therefore to every one their dues, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.* Est. 6.6.

3. Another lust of men, which you shall find Gods Providence hath made great use of, is *curiosity.* A curiosity to know secrets: What shall come to pass in after-times? or a *curiosity* to delight in rare *workmanship of any sort*, &c? This is a great vanity of the heart of man; but the Providence of God hath made great use of it. Of the first sort, there are in holy Writ the instances of *Pharaoh* and *Nebuchadnezzar*; both of them dreamed dreams, wherein God revealed to them things that were to come to pass in the world. Then God inspireth *Joseph*, a great friend to his people, and *Daniel* with wisdom to interpret these dreams to them: this brought them both into high and great favour with those mighty Princes, in subjection to whom the *Jews* at those times were. This indeed is not an ordinary work of Providence, but what God hath done. The second is more ordinary, men have a curiosity to see, and have fine pieces of work done, to hear rare musick, to see fine mathematical operations. Indeed some of these things are very useful, but a curiosity in many of them, is but vanity; *Solomon* after a long experience, so concludes it: but the wise God often makes a most remarkable use of this lust in mens hearts. *David's* skill at his harp brought him to Court. And many sober persons skill, dexterity, and activity in arts and sciences, hath made them very acceptable to those that have had the power of the world in their hands, and put them into great capacities to serve the interest of God in the world: where God hath both shewed his Wisdom, in making use of mens lust of curiosity for his own glory; and also in making his own common and ordinary gifts so serviceable also.

4. A fourth

4. A fourth luſt, which you ſhall obſerve God to make an ordinary uſe of, is that of *coveteouſneſs*. The People of God many times buy their peace and tranquillity; ſometimes they obtain it by their uſefulneſs in trade and traffick, and the detriment the publick revenue would have by rooting them out: ſometimes they make themſelves friends with their induſtrious hands, ſometimes with their liberal hand: This was but our Saviours counſel, *Luk.* 16. 9. *Make to your ſelves friends of the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs.* It is particularly ſaid of *Joſeph*, when he was a ſervant to *Potiphar*, Gen. 39. 2, 3. *That the Lord was with Joſeph, and he was a proſperous man.——And his maſter ſaw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to proſper in his hand: and Joſeph found grace in his ſight, and he ſerved him, and he made him overſeer over all his houſe, and all that he had he put into his hand.* This was Gods firſt ſtep to bring *Joſeph* into a great capacity, that he might be able to protect his people.

5. I will inſtance but in one luſt more, that is, the *malice, hatred, and cruelty of wicked men*, Pſal. 76. 10. *Surely the wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee.* Now this ſeems a ſtrange thing, but there is nothing more ordinary than this. The malice and cruelty of *Pharaoh*, contributed much to the Children of *Iſraels* coming out of *Egypt*: had they not been ſo cruelly dealt with, they would never have been ſo willing to have removed: it is no better than madneſs, not to be juſtified by Religion, nor yet by Reaſon, for private perſons to riſe up in arms againſt their rulers: but *Solomon* tells us, *Oppreſſion makes wiſe men mad*, and God ſometimes makes uſe of the madneſs, both of his Enemies, and of his own People, to bring about his own deſigns. Far be it from me, either to incourage, or to juſtifie ſuch actions; my buſineſs is only to ſhew you how far God makes uſe of mens luſts. But the moſt ordinary and regular way, which God maketh uſe of in this caſe, is by making the ſoberer part of the Princes and Rulers of a Nation, ſenſible of the greatneſs of their peoples ſufferings, and the unreaſonableneſs of the rage and madneſs of their adverſaries; and giving them bowels of compaſſion to their brethren, though it may be they be not of their minds. I remember I have ſomewhere read it in one of the *French* Hiſtorians, that a great Peer of that Nation (though a Papiſt) in the midſt of that woful havock, the fury of the *Romiſh* Prieſts

were

were making, ſtood up in Counſel, and ſaid, *He had no patience to ſee French-men ſo uſed.* And this is very ordinary, the men of the world are not all of a complexion: ſome of them are men of Honour and Vertue, men of Juſtice, *Charity and Mercy*, perſons *almoſt perſwaded to be Chriſtians*, not far from the Kingdom of God; in ſhort, men of moral vertue, abhorring *ſottiſhneſs* and *cruelty*: others of them are men of *blood*, and *violence*, and *cruelty*. Theſe latter are they that make the great havock in the Church of God, breathing out (like *Saul*, *Act.* 9.) threatnings and ſlaughters againſt the Diſciples of the Lord; and commonly like *Saul*, they have *letters from the high-prieſts, to Damaſcus, to the ſynagogues*. It is much, but it is obſervable from the very beginning of ſtory——that the greateſt cruelty and rage which the People of God, that have deſired to walk more ſtrictly and holily with him have met with, hath been from the *corrupt Prieſts and Miniſtry*. It was thus upon the firſt general corruption of the Prieſthood in *Iſrael*: that was you know upon the revolt of the ten Tribes in *Jeroboam's* time: for though before that there were perſonal corruptions, as that of *Hophni* and *Phinehas*, yet (generally) they kept to the Law of God; but in *Jeroboam's* time, the body of the Prieſts was corrupt; for the Scripture ſaid, That *Jeroboam* made of the *meaneſt people prieſts of the high places, whoſoever would, he conſecrated him, and he became one of the prieſts of the high places*, 1 King. 13. 33. It was not to be thought that ſo great a body of that people ſhould all be corrupted, many there were that kept cloſe to the inſtituted worſhip of God at *Hieruſalem*, and would go thither: though abundance of the people, as *Hoſea* ſaith, *Willingly walked after the Commandment*, Hoſ. 5. 11. The Commandment of *Jeroboam*, the *ſon of Nebat*, the Commandment of which you read, 1 *King.* 12. 28, 29, &c. yet many would not. Now as to theſe, the Prophet *Hoſea* tells us, *Hoſ.* 5. 1. The Prieſts were *a ſnare on Mizpah, and a net ſpread upon Tabor, and the revolters were profound to make ſlaughter*. So it was in our Saviours time, the *Prieſts*, and *Scribes*, and *Phariſees*, were the cruel Enemies of Chriſt, and his Diſciples, as you read in the Goſpels, and the ſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles. And ſo it always hath been, and ſtill is in the Church of *Rome*, their *Prieſts* and *Jeſuites* are the bloody men, the cruel men againſt thoſe that cannot

comply

comply with them. But now there are a great many others, that are persons of better nature and temper, that hate sensuality, and cruelty, and injustice, and oppression. Now God often makes use of the immoralities of the Enemies of the People of God, to bring about his designs for their liberty and deliverance: men of honour and vertue, abhor the sensuality and beastlines of the great Enemies of the Church; and although themselves (possibly) be not of the minds of the People of God, yet they abhor injustice, and oppression, and cruelty, and sensuality; and this makes them favour the poor servants of God, as men that have done nothing worthy of such deaths, or bonds, or to be so unreasonably dealt with: and thus God maketh the wrath and rage of bloody men to praise him.

I might go on, and shew you how God makes use of the wars and fightings, the envy, emulation and strife, which often arise amongst the men of the world, (and *James* 3. 1. *Whence come all these, but from the lusts that war in our members?*) to gain his people liberty and protection. But I have spoken enough to justifie this Observation: but it may be some will say to me, Why doth God do this? Could not God do his work by other instruments? And were it not more suitable to the Holiness of God, to bring about his designs by better instruments? To which the answer were good enough to say, *Who art thou that disputest with God?* It is enough for us, that thus it pleaseth him, and that this is consistent enough, both with his Holiness and Wisdom. It is not inconsistent with his *holiness, to mean, and to turn that for good*, which men mean, and intend for evil, (as in *Joseph's* case, *Gen.* 50. 20.) for God doth not put this malice into their hearts, he only *suffereth them to walk in their own ways*, and then *governeth* their lusts to his own praise and glory. But I shall shew you, that this is a very reasonable motion and working of Divine Providence, which will appear to you by the following Considerations:

1. *That God by this sheweth his infinite wisdom and power*, by how much there is the less aptitude and disposition in a cause, to bring forth an effect; by so much must the power and wisdom of the *efficient cause* be made more glorious. Now there is nothing in nature less disposed to the Glory of God, nor that hath so much antipathy to the Glory of God, as sin and lust. What cannot that God do, that can make mens lusts to praise him?

him? Luſt (of its own nature) oppoſeth God; nothing is ſo contrary to his deſigns; for God to make this now to ſerve his deſigns, and to bring about his Counſels; this muſt glorifie God, as an Almighty God, that can do whatſoever he pleaſeth, and by what means ſoever he pleaſeth; yea, and by this means God maketh his *Wiſdom* admirable. When he taketh the wiſe in their own craftineſs, *Come* (ſaith *Pharaoh*) *let us deal wiſely with them:* God makes *Pharaoh's wiſdom* to deſtroy his people, a great means to deliver his people. What an infinitely-wiſe God did he by this declare himſelf? Turning *Pharaoh's* wiſdom into folly, and making it to operate directly contrary to his deliberations.

2. A ſecond Conſideration is this, *That it is but reaſonable that God ſhould make ſome uſe of the worſt of men.* The worſt of men are the Lords creatures, he hath made them, he doth much for them, they live upon his hand of Providence; 'tis reaſonable they ſhould do him ſome ſervice: now, intentionally, and deſignedly, a wicked man will do God no ſervice at all; his heart is quite another way, his life is a purſuit of one luſt or other; if God did not get glory on him beſides his intention, he could have no ſervice at all from him. There is no reaſon that leud and wicked men, covetous, ambitious men, bloody and cruel men ſhould live in the world for nothing; and be maintained from Gods basket for nothing, without doing him any ſervice; they will not ſerve God, as reaſonable creatures ſhould do, offering up their bodies as a living acceptable ſacrifice to God, which the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 12. 1, determines *our reaſonable ſervice:* The Apoſtle therefore to the *Theſſalonians*, calls wicked men *unreaſonable.* They ſhall therefore ſerve God, as *brute creatures*, as the beaſts of the field ſerve him; not knowing what they do, as a meer machine, and engine ſerveth us by the force of our hand; nay in a worſe degree quite contrary to their own counſels, intentions, and deſigns. God could have no ſervice from wicked men, if he did not get himſelf a glory from their luſts, as he got himſelf glory upon *Pharaoh.*

3. *There is ſomething in Gods Counſels to be produced in the world, that is fit for no other hands, than the hands of ſinners, and is hard to be effected any way, but from their luſts.* Theſe are the acts of his Punitive Juſtice upon his People. God is compelled by his Juſtice, ſometimes to *kindle a fire in*

Sion, and to *set up a furnace in Hieruſalem*, to melt, and to try his people, in order to the purging out of their droſs, and taking away their tin. Now as it is luſt which kindleth all fires, ſo (ordinarily) it is the luſt of Gods Enemies, of wicked men, which bloweth up this fire. Sometimes indeed *Ephraim* is againſt *Manaſſes*, and *Manaſſes* againſt *Ephraim*; but (ordinarily) it is the *Aſſyrian*, or *Egyptian*, or *Babylonian*, that muſt deſtroy *Iſrael*. Men do not uſe to ſet ſheep to hunt, and tear ſheep; but to make uſe of dogs for that work.

4. This is a reaſonable motion of Providence, *to incourage the people of God, never to deſpair, but continually to hope in the Lords mercy*. That which uſually diſcourageth our hope in God, for any good as to his Church, is the heighth of the rage of Enemies, the ſad and forlorn ſtate of things, the appearance of never an inſtrument like to do any ſervice for God, or for his People. But none of all this is a ſufficient ground for diſcouragement, if God can make uſe of the worſt of men, and make the luſts of people ſerviceable to his own wiſe counſels, and bringing about his purpoſes. I might alſo have added, that theſe motions of Providence are reaſonable to ſhew wicked men their folly, and how vainly they ſet themſelves againſt the counſels and purpoſes of God; who ordinarily taketh them by guile, and overthroweth them in their own craftineſs. But I have enlarged enough upon the doctrinal part of this Obſervation, I now come to the Application of it.

Uſe 1. In the firſt place let us here *admire the infinite power*, and the *wiſdom of God, and learn at all times to truſt in his word*. What cannot that God do? What will not the wiſdom of that God extend to, who can make the higheſt and proudeſt Enemies, which his glory hath, to ſerve the deſigns and counſels of his glory? The work of *Creation*, is not ſo much a work of infinite power and wiſdom, as this work of Providence. In *Creation*, God only produceth being out of not-being: here God brings out his glory from that which hath an unmeaſurable contrariety to his glory: nothing is ſo deſperately oppoſite to the glory of God, as the ſordid luſts of mans heart: no creature is ſo oppoſite to the honour and glory of God, as a reſolved malitious ſinner is. Now for God to make ſuch a wretch to ſerve him, nay, to make ſuch a wretch in the hot-

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teſt purſuit of his luſts to ſerve him; and by the ſatisfaction of his luſts, to ſerve the great deſign of his glory: O what an Almighty Power, what an infinite wiſdom muſt this ſpeak in God!

And this I ſay ſhould recommend God to us, as a God that may at any time, under any face of things, be truſted. We cannot ſee a worſer face of things, than when wickedneſs is at the heighth, men in the heighth of rage and malice againſt the People of God: when all kind of filthineſs and ſenſuality abounds in a place; when the *vileſt men are exalted, and the wicked walk on every ſide:* they are put together, *Pſal.* 12.8. But under ſuch diſpenſations, Chriſtians, trouble not your ſelves as to Gods care of his Church: indeed it is, and ought to be an afflicting diſpenſation. 1. *For the glory of God.* Under ſuch a face of things, the holy Name of God is blaſphemed, the honour of God is at preſent laid in the duſt. 2. *Such a time muſt needs be a time of great ſuffering to the holy and innocent ſervants of God.* Many particular ſervants of God, muſt be made great ſufferers under ſuch a Providence: But yet incourage your ſelf in God; he that can bring light out of darkneſs, can, and will bring good out of ſuch an evil as this is. The Providence of God doth ordinarily compel even the worſt of men to do his work; *howbeit that they mean not ſo:* one way or other they ſhall do the Lords work; if no other way, yet by making their own folly manifeſt to all men: God often brings wicked men upon the ſtage, to make them more abominable. There are many in the world, men of ſobriety and vertue, would not have believed there had been ſuch horrible injuſtice, and oppreſſion, ſuch horrible, and inſatiable avarice, ſuch mercileſs cruelty in the hearts of many ſinners, if they did not ſee them play their parts upon a ſtage in the world. In the mean time know that you truſt in a God, that knoweth how to make uſe of mens malice, and to make the maddeſt and deſperateſt ſinner ſerve his purpoſes.

Uſe 2. In the ſecond place, what a foundation doth this notion lay, for an Exhortation to all, *to break off their ſins by true repentance, and to give unto God a voluntary choſen ſervice.*

1. *To break off their ſins by a true repentance.* I remember our Lords words to *Saul*, out of Heaven, *Saul, Saul,* (ſaith he) *why perſecuteſt thou me? it is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks.* Suppoſe a perſon, whoſe heart the Devil hath filled with all malice, that if he could, he would pluck God out of Heaven, and root out the Name of God from the Earth: yet methinks this ſhould diſcourage him in his fulleſt career and madneſs; to think, that he that ſitteth in the Heavens, laugheth him to ſcorn; and when he hath done all he can, he ſhall but have effected the Lords counſels, and done the Lords work, although he meant not ſo. Let therefore the ſinners of the Earth be inſtructed, and learn wiſdom: they cannot do what they liſt, and many times, wherein they think, and talk proudly, God ſheweth himſelf above them, and they do Gods work quite beſides, and contrary to their own intentions. There is no encountring with a God, who can make the wrath of man to praiſe him, and reſtrain the remainder of it when he pleaſeth. 2. *If this be ſo, certainly it is wiſdom in men, deſignedly and intentionally to ſerve God:* otherwiſe they loſe their reward, at leaſt their ſpiritual and eternal reward. We find God with temporal rewards, ſometimes rewarding men, that do ſome things at his command, though their hearts in the action be not right with God: ſo *Jehu* was rewarded, his Sons inherited the Throne to the 4*th* generation; but God at laſt viſited the blood of *Jezreel upon the houſe of Jehu.* But no man hath a ſpiritual reward, inward joy. and peace of conſcience; nor ſhall have an eternal reward, but that man, who with purpoſe of heart ſerveth the Lord.

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SERMON XXII.

Pſal. CVII. 43.

Whoſo is wiſe and will obſerve theſe things, even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

I Proceed yet in making ſome Obſervations concerning the motions of Providence, in the preſervation and government of the world. An eighth Obſervation, which I ſhall make, and a little enlarge upon, is this:

Obſerv. 8. *That the Providence of God is wonderfully ſeen in bringing to light hidden counſels of darkneſs, and puniſhing of ſins, which tend to the diſturbance of civil ſocieties.* Indeed there are not many ſins but have an ill influence upon humane ſociety; and the reaſon is, becauſe there is no law in the world ſo fitted to the proſperous beings of Societies, as the law of the Lord is: but yet there are ſome which tend to a more eminent diſturbance and confuſion in them. Such are now plottings and treaſons againſt Princes, whom God hath made the heads of theſe Societies; *Seditions*, and raiſing up *mutinies*, *murthers*, &c. Theſe make great gaps and diſorders in political bodies, and you ſhall obſerve the Providence of God bearing an eminent teſtimony againſt them, *Eccleſ.* 10. 20. *Curſe not the King, no not in thy thought; and curſe not the rich in thy bed-chamber; for a bird of the air ſhall carry the voice, and that which hath wings ſhall tell the matter*: it ſhall be diſcovered, it ſhall be ſuddenly diſcovered, and by ways, that one would never think of. Two things you ſhall obſerve in the workings of Divine Providence as to this thing:

1. *That*

1. *That it is very rarely, that the Providence of God ſuffereth any ſuch deſigns to come to any effect and iſſue.*

2. *That if at any time he doth for the puniſhment of flagitious rulers ſuffer them to come to iſſue, he very rarely ſuffereth the actors in them to go down to their graves in peace.* This abundantly juſtifieth it ſelf in the ſtory of Scripture, and in all other ſtory.

'Tis very rarely, that the Providence of God ſuffereth conſpiracies to take effect. Of an hundred plots, that you read of in ſtory, to take away the lives of Princes, and make diſturbances in political affairs, it is very rare to read of any that take effect, *Job* 5. 12. either the Lord makes their own hearts to fail them, or weakneth their hands, that they cannot find their enterprize; or put's it into the hearts of ſome of the conſpirators to reveal the matter, or cauſeth ſome ſtrange impreſſion and jealouſies in thoſe whoſe lives are aimed at: ſome way or other the Providence of God worketh, to cruſh the cockatrices egg, before it hatcheth into a ſerpent. Our Queen *Elizabeth* was a famous inſtance of the ſpecial Providence of God in this kind, over ſuch, as God maketh rulers over others. What a ſtrange diſcovery had we of the Powder-treaſon in this Nation? But this is but the firſt thing which I commended to you under this Obſervation.

2. Sometimes the Providence of God, for his wiſe ends, doth ſuffer ſuch conſpiracies to come to iſſue; *either for the perſonal ſins of ſuch rulers, or for the ſins of the people, over whom God hath ſet them*; but when he doth, *he rarely ſuffereth the actors in them to go down to their graves in peace.* You read 2 *Sam.* 4. that *Baanah* and *Recab*, two ſervants of *Iſhboſeth*, conſpired againſt him, and ſlew him, *ver.* 9. *David* cauſeth them *both to be ſlain. Baaſha*, 1 *King.* 16. 27, conſpireth againſt *Nadab*, and ſlayeth him; (indeed the Scripture doth not expreſs the particular kind of his death) but he threatned him by *Jehu* the Prophet, 1 *King.* 16. 3, 4. and tells us, *ver.* 7. *That the wrath of the Lord came againſt him for all the evil that he did— in being like to the houſe of Jeroboam, and becauſe he killed him*, that is, he killed *Nadab*, the Son of *Jeroboam.*

And againſt *Elah* his Son, *Zimri* killed him, *ver.* 20. *Had Zimri peace that ſlew his maſter?* no, he killed himſelf; when he had reigned but ſeven days, *ver.* 28, after him *Ahab* (a moſt

most wicked man) dyed in war, his Son *Jehoram* was slain by *Jehu*, and *Jehu* executed both the Lord's counsel and command in what he did; so the Lord spared him, and three or four after him of his generation, to fulfil his promise to *Jehu*. After this, 2 *King.* 15, *Shallum* conspireth against *Zechariah*, and slayeth him, but reigns only one month; and *Menahem* requiteth his bloodshed, and slayeth him: *Joash* was slain for the blood of the Sons of *Jehojada*, 2 *King.* 24. 23. *Amaziah* his Son succeedeth him, 2 *Chron.* 25. 1. & *ver.* 3. *He slayeth his servants that had slain the King his father.* And as this notion is justified everywhere in sacred story, so civil story also maketh it good: *Solomon* saith, *He that breaketh an hedg, a serpent shall bite him:* Government is the hedg of a Nation, and rulers are the stakes in that hedg, that keep it together; and it is very rare, but the Providence of God ordereth it so, that a serpent biteth him, who breaketh this hedg, which the Providence of God hath set up about a Nation, or People. Princes and Rulers, are (in a great measure) priviledged persons, and have great prerogatives from Divine Providence. And this motion of Divine Providence seemeth very reasonable. 1. *If we consider the relation that they have unto God.* 2. *Or their usefulness unto men.* I say, first, if we consider their *relation unto God*, which I shall open to you in three things: 1. They are the *Ordinance of God.* 2. They are *Gods Creatures.* 3. They are *Gods Vicegerents.*

1. *Rulers are Gods Ordinance.* This is the reason which the Apostle giveth Christians, for subjection to governours, *Rom.* 13. 1, 2. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God: whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.* God is a God of order, and not of confusion, as well in States, as in Churches: and for the conservation of this order, he hath been pleased to ordain *Government*, a subordination and subjection of some unto others: and a man cannot rise up against this, but he must rise up in opposition to a Divine Ordinance. In 1 *Pet.* 2. 13, Rulers are called *the Ordinance of man*, or as it is in the Greek, *an humane creature:* but that must not be understood of *Government* in it self, (that is the *Ordinance of God*). I am aware that that is a Text, that is much made use of to prove Christians duty of Obedience to humane Laws and

Sancti-

Sanctions. But this ſeemeth not to be the ſenſe: For, 1. *We cannot ſubmit thus to every Ordinance of man for the Lords ſake.* Men may command us things which are contrary to the Will and Command of God, and in ſuch caſes our Allegiance is firſt due unto the great God. 2. Again, *The diſtribution that followeth, ſeemeth not to favour this ſenſe——whether to the King as ſupreme, or unto rulers ſent by him.* Let the form of Government, under which you live, be what it will, let the perſons entruſted with the execution of this Government, be what they will, their qualities are not ſo much to be regarded, as the office which they bear. 3. Thus both the *Syriack* verſion, and ſome of the antients interpret it: the *Syriack* verſion interprets it——*Be you ſubject to all the Sons of men.* 4. But laſtly, The word κτίσις, which is there uſed, is always applied to perſons, not to ſuch conſtitutions, as laws are. Beſides, there are that think, that the Apoſtle uſeth a dialect, then in uſe: there is nothing more ordinary in Latin Authors, than thoſe phraſes of *creare conſulem, creare dictatorem*, &c. it is a phraſe a little in uſe amongſt us, to expreſs the conferring of ſome particular honours. But I digreſs too far, certain it is, that as Government in the abſtract, ſo particular governours in the concrete, are the *Ordinance of God*, and ſo have a more eminent relation unto God: All men are the creatures of God, they are the works of his hands, rulers are the Ordinance of God.

2. *Rulers are Gods creatures*, and that not in a large ſenſe, (ſo every thing elſe is) but in a more eminent way; as Rulers in that capacity, to which God hath called them, they are *Gods creatures*; Prov. 8. 15. *By me Kings reign, and Princes decree juſtice: by me Princes rule, and nobles, even all the Judges of the earth.* It muſt not be underſtood only *by my ſufferance and permiſſion, nor by me in an ordinary courſe of Providence*, as all things are by God; but by me in a way of *ſpecial Providence* and deſignation: for (as the Pſalmiſt ſaith), *Pſal.* 75. 6, 7. *Promotion cometh not from the eaſt, nor from the weſt, nor from the ſouth: but God is the judg, he pulleth down one, and he ſetteth up another.* And this muſt be ſaid of the worſt of Rulers: they came not up into that place of government, without the Lord. *Saul* was a Prince bad enough, God foretold by *Samuel* what he would be; yet you know what a ſpecial hand God had in the ſetting of him up. And God ſetteth up good or bad Rulers

over

over a people, according to his designs to bless and prosper, or to chastise and punish them. Rulers, as rulers, be they good or bad, gentile, or froward, are God's creatures in an eminent way. Now as a Prince thinks himself obliged in honour to maintain his creatures, whom he hath set up in any place, for any end; so God will maintain Princes, as they are his creatures, raised up for his special designs.

3. Nay further yet, *Rulers are Gods vicegerents*, Psal. 82. 6. *I have said you are Gods*; and in this sense it is true which the Apostle saith, *There are Gods many, and Lords many.* Every Prince is but a Vice-roy to the King of Kings, a *Deputy-Lieutenant* to the great Lord of Heaven and Earth. This createth a very near relation betwixt God and them, and highly engageth the Providente of God for them. Every Prince taketh a special care of persons, which he sendeth abroad for *Embassadors*, and which represent his person and authority. Plots and conspiracies against Princes, are much against God himself. God giveth this reason for his severe Law against murther, *Gen. 9. 6. Whoso sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.* The Image of God in man, lay much in his *Knowledg, Wisdom, Righteousness, dominion over other creatures.* If God sendeth a people, a Prince, in whom nothing of the Image of God can be seen in the three former things, *Knowledg*, or *Wisdom*, or *Righteousness:* yet he hath given unto all Rulers *a dominion over his creatures*, and that not only over brute and inanimate creatures, (every man hath such a dominion, and is a great Prince) but over rational creatures: and herein much of the Image of God, who is the *King of kings*, and *Lord of lords, and ruler of Princes*, is to be seen. Now I say considering this great relation of Rulers to God, it is but reasonable that God should watch over them with a special eye of Providence, maintaining his own Ordinance, his own Creatures, his own Vicegerents in the Earth.

2. But secondly, The reasonableness of it will appear, if you consider the *usefulness of Rulers unto men.* Upon the former account I have shewed you how God consulteth his own glory. I shall now shew you how God in these motions of Providence consulteth our good. It is usually said, and I think very truly, *Better Tyranny than Anarchy*; better a very ill oppressive government, then no government: He that would pluck up the

government of any place, would but pluck up the bridg, which in a ſhort time, himſelf will have occaſion to go over: ſo that God in his ſpecial Providence towards, and for Rulers, ſheweth a ſpecial kindneſs to humane ſociety. What do laws ſignifie without Executors of them? Now this is the office of Rulers, to execute the Laws, and if ſome of them be partial in the execution of them, and ſpare ſome tranſgreſſors; yet there's none of them, but in many things do execute juſtice, and keep up ſomething of the face of order of humane ſociety. But I have hitherto only inſtanced in one ſort of ſins, eminently diſturbing humane ſocieties, *treaſons*, *ſeditions*, *conſpiracies*, &c. I come now to a ſecond.

2. *Oppreſſion is another ſin of this nature*, and this muſt be the ſin of Superiors, and men that are in power over others. I may joyn with it *tyranny* and *cruelty*, they are of a great cognation one to another: Oppreſſion is one of the crying ſins of a Nation, and the Providence of God is eminently ſeen in giving teſtimony againſt it: this was that ſin for which God ſo plagued *Pharaoh*, Exod. 3. 7. *For the oppreſſion of the poor, for the ſighing of the needy, now will I ariſe* (ſaith the Lord), and the vengeance of God is ſo certain againſt oppreſſors, that the wiſe man calleth to us, *Prov.* 3. 31. *Envy thou not the oppreſſor, and chuſe none of his ways.* Doth he flouriſh? doth he grow rich and great? *Envy him not, chuſe none of his ways.* It is very ſeldom that God letteth eminent oppreſſors eſcape. If they be amongſt *inferiour Rulers*, God ſtirreth up their *ſuperiours* againſt them at one time or other: If chief rulers be *oppreſſors*, God hath other ways to puniſh them, either immediately by his own hand, as he did *Pharaoh*; or ſuffering people to throw off the reins of Government, which was the caſe of *Abijam*, though he did but threaten *oppreſſion*, 1 King. 12. 11. All men are not wiſe, the moſt of people are over-ruled by their own luſts and paſſions, and not governed by reaſon: but even for wiſe men *Solomon* tells us, *Eccleſ.* 7. 7. *That oppreſſion will make them mad*, put them out of the government of their reaſon. It is indeed madneſs, and nothing but madneſs for private perſons to riſe up againſt a government; but we ſee it ſometimes done, and uſually oppreſſion, eminent, and general oppreſſion gives the occaſion, and is the proximate cauſe of it; but one way or other God (ordinarily) revengeth *oppreſſion* by ſignal Providences; and therefore

fore the wiſe man ſaith, *Eccleſ.* 5. 8. *If thou ſeeſt the oppreſſion of the poor, and the violent perverting of judgment and juſtice in a people, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the higheſt regardeth, and there is higher than they.* Now the reaſon of the ſpecial and remarkable Providence of God in this caſe, may be conceived to be, 1. *Gods great love to Juſtice and Judgment.* 2. *His great kindneſs to Political Societies.* God is a juſt and righteous God, and loveth juſtice: Juſtice is an eſſential Attribute of God, he could not be God, if he could be unjuſt: he giveth to every one their due, and he cannot but give every one their due; and the righteous God loveth righteouſneſs, and hateth iniquity. Now oppreſſion is nothing elſe but a violent perverting of Juſtice and Judgment, by him that hath power on his ſide. *Solomon* ſaith, *Prov.* 14. 31. *He that oppreſſeth the poor, reproacheth his maker:* he reproacheth his Maker, becauſe it is God that hath made his *brother poor*, and put him under his feet. Again, he reproacheth his Maker, *becauſe God hateth and abhorreth all oppreſſion and injuſtice*; he pretendeth to rule in the place of God, but he reproacheth his Maker: God dealeth ſo by none, his law directeth the quite contrary. Again, he reproacheth his Maker, becauſe *God hath taken the poor, the ſtranger, the fatherleſs, and the widow into his ſpecial protection*; and hath given many particular laws about them, and given the world a particular charge concerning them.

2. *As God is a God of Juſtice, and loveth that; ſo he hath alſo a great kindneſs for humane ſocieties, and for brotherly love.* God hath in Creation diſpoſed man to ſociety, he is not *like the wild Aſs, that loveth to be alone in the wilderneſs*; he hath alſo diſpoſed them to trades and employments, ſerving one another; ſo as though a beaſt, or a bird could live without one another, yet men can live in no degree of felicity (outward felicity) without company; nor can ſociety be well maintained without *juſtice* and *brotherly love*; injuſtice, violence, and oppreſſion break all humane ſociety. There is nothing that breaks humane ſociety, more than oppreſſion doth; when the greater devour the leſſer, and the richer ſwallow up thoſe that are more poor, that they might be left alone in the Earth. There's nothing more oppoſite to brotherly love, the ligament of humane ſociety, than oppreſſion is; and therefore the ſpecial Providence

of God in the punishment of it, and delivering the oppressed from the bondage of it, is not to be judged a strange thing, but exceeding consonant to the nature of God.

3. A third sin which makes gaps in humane societies, is *murder*, a private, willful taking away the life of another; I say *private*, for if it be done by the hand of Justice, it is no *murther*: I add *wilful* to distinguish it from *casual homicide*, when one is the cause of the death of another, not in the least intending him death, or any harm tendent to it. It was one of Gods Precepts to *Noah*, Gen. 9. 6. *Whoso sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he him.* Afterwards it was one of his Ten Commandments, given to his people on *Mount Sinai, Thou shalt do no murther.* And although in the case of *casual homicide*, he appointed *Cities of refuge*, to which the manslayer might fly; and be free from the avenger of blood; yet for the wilful murtherer, *Numb.* 35. 31. he saith—*you shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murtherer, which is guilty of death; but he shall surely be put to death:* and verse 33. *So shall you not pollute the land wherein you are: for blood, it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.* And accordingly the Providence of God hath (generally) ordered the government of the several parts of the world, that unless it hath been in a very debauch't nation, scarce any place hath been found where the Rulers have not been zealous, even from the light of nature, against wilful murtherers; and the Providence of God is in nothing more eminently seen, than in the discovery of such transgression, and bringing them to justice. It is a common observation, therefore I shall need the less to insist upon the Justification of it. Sometimes God makes use of the *fear and passion*, and shy-looks of the guilty conscience of the murtherer, to discover himself: sometimes the birds of the air shall pursue him (as I remember I have somewhere read of a famous story of murtherers, pursued by Crows and Ravens), sometimes a *Dog* shall do it; sometimes a *Spirit* shall do it: in short, the stories are very many, and strange, of the Providence of God in discovering of murther: Murthers make great gaps and disorders in humane societies.

4. *Adultery* is another sin, which maketh great confusion in humane society; though not like those beforementioned, but in

a more secret way; yet great disorder it begets. By Gods old Law, the *adulterer* was to be put to death; it was an extraordinary act, and one of those we call *heroick acts*, not to be defended, but by an immediate *impetus*, by a command from God, that of *Phinehas*, I mean, taking a javelin, and at once running through *Zimri* and *Cosbi*: God justified it, and promised *Phinehas* a *reward* for it. The vengeance of God upon those that have given up themselves to this sin, is eminent; he hath prepared a dart to strike through their livers, which he useth in no other case, a peculiar defiling, tormenting disease: The persons that are guilty, are often sent to hell in the act, by the jealousie of Husbands; and by the Laws of most Nations, such manslayers are justified. It is a sin indeed, that doth not make that havock in humane society, which some of those beforementioned do; and therefore the Providence of God is not so remarkably seen in preventing it, and discovering preparations to it; but it is eminently seen in the punishment of it, both as to punishments in this life, and in his threatnings, as to depriving them of a life to come.

5. I will instance in one more, and that is, *Rebellion and disobedience to the lawful commands of parents.* It is the fifth of of the Ten Commandments, *Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* Upon which account the Apostle calleth it, *the first commandment with promise.* Indeed this sin is the root of most disorder that is in political society. The rebellious child seldom proveth a dutiful wife, or good husband, nor good servant, nor good subject, unless grace first maketh a change in their hearts, and bringeth them from under the government of their passions; the Providence of God is therefore eminently to be seen in the punishment of such children. By the Law of God, *the Son that obeyed not his father, was to be stoned to death.* Read *Deut.* 21. 18, 19, 20. *He that curseth his father or mother, shall dye the death,* Exod. 21. 17. Levit. 20. 9. Mal. 15. 4. Mar. 7. 20. And if you observe the Providence of God, it strangely pursueth rebellious children with vengeance, they seldom prosper.

6. I will instance but in one sin more, *That is persecution, or eminent disturbance of others, for their conscience towards God.* This is a sin which doth not only disturb humane society, but the

the beſt of humane ſocieties, the ſociety of the Church: it diſturbeth humane ſociety, ingageth husband againſt wife, and children againſt parents, and brother againſt brother; it ſpoileth that commerce and traffique, by which political ſocieties are maintained and upheld. As to that, it cannot be without a great connexion and twiſting of mens intereſts of divers perſwaſions, one with another; ſo as the interrupting the free courſe of one, is the interruption of another: and while perſons are rifled in their houſes, haled to priſons, there muſt needs be an interruption in their commerce. But this ſin hath this further aggravation, *That it makes diſturbance in the beſt ſocieties*; the Aſſemblies of Gods People for his worſhip, are the beſt of humane ſocieties, God is in the midſt of them, more preſent with them, than with any ſocieties in the world beſides them. Thoſe that rudely break in upon ſuch Aſſemblies, break in upon the great God of Heaven and Earth, who hath ſaid, *Whereſoever two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in the midſt amongſt them*; and may juſtly expect ſome ſuch extraordinary judgment, as the *Sodomites* met with, when they would have broken open *Lots* houſe, to have pull'd the *Angels* out; but God doth not always work miraculouſly, but ſeldom fails (even in this life) to ſet his mark upon this ſort of ſinners. It is an obſervation that I have formerly made to you. You ſhall in ſtory read of *perſecutions*, which ſometimes have laſted long, very long, but ſeldom of a *perſecutor* that hath laſted long: he is an odious, abominable wretch, whom vengeance will neither ſuffer to live, nor often to dye after the ordinary death of men. He that will but read over the ſtory of the ten Primitive perſecutions, will ſee this abundantly confirmed: or if any thinks thoſe ſtories too old, let him read what became of *Gardiner* and *Bonner*, thoſe two bloody wretches in Queen *Maries* days, and of divers others that were their inſtruments, and willingly followed their Commandments; and poſſibly he may confirm himſelf in this Obſervation, by later examples than thoſe alſo. But I have inſtanced in thoſe ſins, which do moſt eminently diſturb humane ſocieties, and ſpoken enough to the doctrinal part of this Obſervation. I ſhall reduce all I ſhall ſay by way of Application to two heads: 1. *Shewing you what advantage this obſervation giveth me, to call upon all men, but eſpecially thoſe in higher orbs, to praiſe the Lord.* 2. *To perſwade all men to take heed, as of all*

ſin,

ſin, ſo eſpecially of ſuch ſins as theſe are, againſt which the wrath of God is ſo eminently revealed.

Uſe 1. In the firſt place, let then all men that live upon the Earth *praiſe the Lord*; *but eſpecially ſuch as are ſuperiors and rulers over others*, and more eſpecially *ſuch as are his Church.* The Pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* 135. 1. calls to all, ſaying, *Praiſe the Lord, praiſe ye the name of the Lord*, and *ver.* 19, 20, 21. He calleth in particular, *Bleſs the Lord, O houſe of Iſrael: Bleſs the Lord, O houſe of Aaron: Bleſs the Lord, O houſe of Levi*; *you that fear the Lord, bleſs the Lord: Bleſſed be the Lord out of Zion, which dwelleth at Hieruſalem.* 1. This obſervation calleth to all *the ſons and daughters of men to bleſs the Lord.* We are all ſociable creatures, and much of the comfort of our lives lyeth in our ſocieties and fellowſhips one with another, either in our family-ſocieties, or in our civil-ſocieties, or in our Church-ſocieties. We ſhould think it a life worſe than death, to be condemned to live *like a wild Aſs alone in the wilderneſs.* Now there are ſome luſts of men, that would ſpoil us of all this comfort. God peculiarly ſets himſelf againſt them, and makes theſe the marks for his arrows of vengeance. The *Jews* ſaid of the *Centurion*, *He hath loved our nation, and hath built us a ſynagogue.* We may ſay of our good God, he hath *loved mankind*, for he hath taken care to preſerve order in humane ſocieties, and ſeverely to chaſten the invaders upon the rights of others. What an ingagement doth this lay upon all men to praiſe the Lord? Certainly ſirs, there is a great deal of praiſe, and glory, and homage due to God from all men, as they are concerned in their ſeveral ſocieties. There is a great deal of glory due to God from families, for his teſtimony againſt thoſe luſts of men, (ſuch as are *murtherers* and *adulterers*) which in a ſhort time would ſpoil all the comfort of thoſe ſocieties. Certainly every family is bound to worſhip God, and to walk with God. But particularly,

1. *Let Rulers praiſe the Lord.* Let all the Princes of the Earth give homage to him that ought to be ſerved; they are more eſpecial marks for furious and ambitious mens luſts. Gods Providence (as you have heard) is eminently ſeen in preventing their dangers, in *revenging their harms. Surely then* (as *David* ſaith) *thoſe that rule over men ſhould be juſt, ruling them in the fear* 2 Sam. 23. 3, 4, 5.

fear of the Lord: their light ſhould be like the light of the morning without clouds. God hath not only ſet them up as lights upon an hill, but he hath made his ſpecial Providence to be a lanthorn about them; that 'tis rarely, that the wind of ſedition and treaſon prevails to blow them out, and then 'tis (ordinarily) for ſome eminent Provocation of God. But I am not ſpeaking to perſons in that capacity. You that are parents, *praiſe the Lord:* Gods ſpecial Providence you ſee reacheth you, and in a great meaſure ſecureth you from that great heart-ach of rebellious and diſobedient children. I know you will ſay, How then cometh this to be the great affliction of many good parents? To which I anſwer: 1. *There is many a good parent may have been but like good old Ely*, too indulgent and cockering to their children; ordinarily God keepeth up the authority of parents over their children, until themſelves have proſtituted it; and in the rebellion and diſobedience of their children, they may read their own ſin, and ſee as much cauſe to be humbled for that, as any thing elſe, as *David* in the caſe of *Adonijah*, 1 *King.* 1. 5, 6. And herein the goodneſs of God towards parents will be ſeen, that if he doth not (upon their endeavours) ſecure to them the duty of their children; yet he will not fail to revenge their quarrels againſt them.

2. *Let the poor and weak of the earth praiſe the Lord:* he hath declared himſelf *the father of the fatherleſs, and the judg of the widows, a refuge for the oppreſſed*, Pſal. 68. 5. Exod. 22. 5. Pſal. 10. 11. How are all the widows, and fatherleſs children, all the poor and oppreſſed people of the world bound to praiſe, and to ſerve this God, who hath taken upon himſelf the ſpecial patronage and protection of them? This indeed would be the beſt uſe we could poſſibly make of this Obſervation, relating to the ſpecial Providence of God, if it might lay a ſpecial obligation upon all thoſe, who are thus eſpecially concerned, to magnifie God as their great patron and defender. And how can they praiſe God more effectually, than in doing thoſe particular duties which concern them all in their reſpective relations? or with reference to thoſe peculiar circumſtances of Providence, under which they are acted. I ſhall add but one branch of Application more, and indeed it is not a new Uſe, for it is a part of our praiſe and homage which we owe unto God upon this Reflexion, *viz.*

Uſe 2. To all, *to take heed of thoſe ſins, which God in his word declares himſelf more eminently to abhor,* and in the execution of Providence, *doth moſt ſeverely puniſh.* All ſin is in it ſelf a filthy and abominable thing, and the juſt object of every good mans hatred: for ſhould not we hate what God hateth? and what hath of all things the greateſt oppoſition to God? yes, we ought to hate it with a perfect hatred. But ſuch is the naughtineſs of our heart, that we are not ſo led to an hatred and abhorrence of ſin, from the intrinſecal evil, and obliquity of it, as from the dangerous and pernicious conſequence of it. Death, eternal death is the wages of every ſin; but this being only matter of faith to bold ſinners, (none having ever come from the dead to give them an account of thoſe flames) the puniſhments of ſin in this life, are thoſe things which moſt deter carnal ſenſual men. But if men will look no further, nor believe any more; yet let this lay ſome law upon us, and make us afraid of thoſe ſins which I have inſtanced in, being ſuch, whoſe judgment the Providence of God ſeldom letteth ſleep ſo long, as to another life. Let this mind us not to *meddle with them that are given to change, that curſe Kings and Rulers in their bed-chambers,* and are of turbulent and unquiet ſpirits, always plotting, and contriving ſeditions, and treaſons, and diſturbances to civil governours: it is very rarely, that God ſuffereth their deſigns to come to iſſue, or their perſons to come to the grave in peace. 2. *What a law ſhould it lay upon the rich and great men of the earth,* to take heed of violent perverting juſtice and judgment, of turning away the cauſes of the widows, and the fatherleſs in judgment: To conſider, that he who is the higheſt, doth conſider the matter; and there is one higher than the higheſt of them, who abuſe their power to trample the poor under foot. If men be not turned *Atheiſts,* and have baniſhed all the fear of God from their eyes and hearts; it muſt a little give them law, and lay them under ſome reſtraints, as to thoſe horrible ſins, of *murther, perſecution, defiling their neighbours wives,* &c. To conſider that theſe are ſome of the ſins, which go ordinarily before-hand to judgment, and which God uſually revengeth by ſome ſpecial remarkable Providences in this life. But it is time to finiſh this diſcourſe. Let us beg Gods bleſſing upon it.

SERMON XXIII.

Psal. CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I Am in a discourse about the observable things of Divine Providence. When do you think, shall I have finished it? *Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night declareth knowledg.* When I have said all that I can, I must conclude with *Job, Lo these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion of him do we understand?* However, it is wonderfully sweet to know the least of God. If a learned man could think it worth his while to write a book of the *admiranda Nili*, the admirable and observable things of the famous River of *Nile*; What a book might be written, and how much worth a pen-mans hand would it be, to write a book, and call it, *Admiranda*, or *Observanda Providentiæ Divinæ*, the admirable and observable things of Divine Providence? But leaving Prefaces, I proceed to a ninth Observation, which is this:

Observ. 9. *The Providence of God often repayeth both good and evil, and especially charity and cruelty in this life in its own kind*, 1 Cor. 3. 8. 2 Cor. 5. 10. That God will reward every man *according to his works*, is most certain, and is a piece of Divine Justice; he cannot condemn the innocent, nor clear the guilty, there will be a *now* when God will visit for all sin: and though sinners do evil an hundred years, yet the day of vengeance will come. And to let us know the certainty of it, oftentimes the Prophets of God in the denouncing of judgments yet a far off, cryed out, *It is come, It is come*; and gave the alarum, as if the enemy had already entred the gates. But God doth not recompence all sinners in this life: Judgment comes afterward.

But

But for those whom God doth chastise in this life, he doth not punish them all the same way; some are punished with temporal judgments, and those some of them of one sort, some of another: others he punisheth with spiritual judgments, blindness of mind, hardness of heart. And it is the same case for rewards of grace, some have little reward for all their service for God, until they come in Heaven; others are rewarded in this life, but in different manners. The Observation which I am making, concerneth *charity* and *mercy*, and the vices opposite to it, such as are, cruelty, hardheartedness to those in want and misery. In these cases I observe Gods Providence often retaliates. I say, 1. The Providence of God doth often recompence other sins in this manner, but especially sins against *charity* and *brotherly love*. God many times repayeth other sins in their kind: our Saviour by this argument dissuades from rash censuring, and censorious judging of others, *Matth.* 7. 1, 2. *For with what judgment you judg, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be meted to you again.* (A text which if well thought upon, should deter Christians from the too common practice of censuring and judging one another) especially in doubtful things, where they are not of a mind; as if sincerity and uprightness were the Prerogative of a party in Religion, or annexed to some particular forms. You know God threatned *David* for his adultery with *Bathsheba*, *That he would take his wives before his eyes, and give them to his neighbour, and he should lye with his wives in the sight of the Sun*, 2 Sam. 12. 11. and it was fulfilled by the permission (though not by the instigation) of Divine Providence, in 2 *Sam.* 16. 22. Spoiling and plundering of others, taking away their goods without a just warrant from God, is another sin we find thus threatned, *Isa.* 33. 1. *Wo to thee that spoilest, and thou wert not spoiled; those that thou so rifledst, never did thee any wrong; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee: when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled, and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.* But that indeed referreth to the more special observation, as to sins opposite to that Charity we should exercise to our brethren, to which I now come. I say it is very observable, that God punisheth *sins against charity*, and rewardeth deeds, and *acts of charity* in their kind, *secundum legem Talionis*, ordinarily giving the Authors of both

like for like. I will first shew it you in the motions of Providence, as to the execution of *Vindicative Justice*, in the punishment of sins against Charity. Against which men may sin, either by *omissions*, hardening their hearts from their brother in distress, not relieving him when it is in their power, according to their ability; or by *commissions*: *murders*, *oppressions*, *cruelty*, are all sins against *Charity*. 1. For *omissions*. It is a dreadful text, *Prov.* 21. 13. *He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and shall not be heard.* A text worth deliberating upon by those who find their hearts so shut up in cases of Charity: not that we are bound to hear the cry of all that are poor. There are some poor, that the greatest act of Charity we can shew them, is not to relieve them, that they may learn not to be idle, and wander up and down begging, refusing to work. The poor we are concerned in, are Gods poor; I hope we favour none that are lazy, idle, or leud, and by that means bring themselves to, and continue themselves at a morsel of bread; far be it from me, or any Minister of Jesus Christ, to plead for such. You from us hear the cries of the Lords poor, take heed of *stopping your ears at their cry*, remember *Solomons* word, Gods word by *Solomon*: *He that doth so, he also shall cry, and not be heard:* you may also come into such a condition, or you may have a child may come to it through age, through Gods hand upon him. You remember the story of *Naomi*, she went out *full*, she returned *empty*; the story of *Job*, and others in Scripture. I could tell you the stories of *Belisarius*, of divers persons of far greater estates (some of them), than any that hear me this day, yet brought to live upon the baskets of others: who knows what you or yours may come to? Do you think the great fire at *London* 1666, that at *Northampton* but the last year; That at a Town in this County two or three years ago, at *Cottenham* in *Cambridg-shire* the other day, hath not given many instances of this nature? (for God of late hath very remarkably contended with *England*, as by such a plague, as our forefathers never knew; so by a multitude of such devouring fires, for number and greatness not to be parallel'd). God make us to understand his Rod, and how many ways *he is as a moth unto England*, secretly, and gradually, and almost irreparably devouring and destroying us. This maketh our days full of the cry of the poor: God grant we be not also full

of

of ſuch as ſtop their ears at the cry of the poor, either giving nothing, or in no proportion to relieve them. I wiſh we could conſider and remember that Text, and think what may be our portion, and do as we would be done by, and remember, God often puniſheth this uncharitableneſs in its kind. Men of hard-hearts in proſperity, (ordinarily) meet with hard-hearts in their adverſity; with what meaſure they mete to others, it is meted unto them again. The Apoſtle, *Gal.* 6. 1. *perſwadeth the reſtoring of a brother fallen in the ſpirit of meekneſs*, and uſeth this Topick, *Conſidering thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted.* And to the *Hebrews* he ſpeakes, *To remember them that are bound, as bound with them: and them which ſuffer adverſity, as being your ſelves in the body*, Heb. 13. 2. There's much in thoſe words, *Leſt thou alſo be tempted*, and thoſe, *as being your ſelves in the body*. In caſes of true charity, Chriſtians, as they ſhould conſider other things, ſo they ſhould conſider, *that they themſelves are in the body*; they may loſe their eſtates, their *health*, their *limbs*; they are not in Heaven yet, they *are in the world*, and they are in the body; they are not meerly ſpirits invulnerable, *impenetrable:* Men ſhould think my houſe may be fired, and all I have loſt in an hour or two: I may loſe my eyes, my limbs, as this poor creature hath, *I am* in the *body*. So in thoſe words there's a great Emphaſis, *Leſt thou alſo be tempted:* Tempted, ſometimes ſignifies as much as afflicted, (though indeed in that Text it ſeems to ſignifie *ſollicited to ſin, and overcome*). God (ſaith the Apoſtle) for thy rigid dealing with thy brother, over-born with a temptation to ſin, may ſuffer the Devil to give thee a *foil*; would'ſt thou in ſuch a caſe be roughly dealt with thy ſelf? With what meaſure men mete to others, God meaſureth to them again. Let me ſay to you, take heed of omitting your duty in a charitable act, leſt thou alſo comeſt to be ſo afflicted, as to need others charity; and when thou art ſo, God ſhould repay thee in thy own kind, ſo ſtraiten mens hearts towards thee, that from perſons, from whom thou mighteſt have expected pounds, thou haſt not ſo many pence: think with thy ſelf how ſuch a thing would pleaſe you? Let me here give you two rules, which I think your Reaſons will all concur with.

1. *It is a fooliſh thing for any perſon (in circumſtances of mortality) ſo to govern himſelf in his converſation, as if he were not ſubject to the common accidents of that ſtate.* The Apoſtle ſaith

saith of *Elijah*, *That he was a man subject to like passions with other men:* The Apostle speaks of humane weaknesses, sinful infirmities; and God considereth that, and gives us allowances for it: and therefore though *Job* had many ill fits of impatience, when the hand of God was heavy upon him; yet God saith, *Behold the patience of Job.* We are all of us also subject to the same sufferings, and the Apostle from this Topick, comforteth his *Corinthians* in those first (and furious) times of the Gospel, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13. *There hath no temptation taken you, but what is common to men.* Now I say there is nothing more foolish, than for any of us in our conversation to govern our selves, as if we were not so, but out of the gun-shot of the chastising Providence of God. Our bodies are subject to death, to sicknesses, to old age, and impotencies; our estates are exposed to the fire, to the thief, to the mercilesse soldier, to the oppressor. Now for a man in his conversation to govern himself so, as if he were never to dye; as if he were never to be sick; as if it were not possible that a fire should devour his pleasant things, that he or his should not be brought to straits, is no better than folly and madness.

2. *It is as foolish a thing for a man to promise himself, that in case of such accidents, others should be kinder to him, than he hath been to others in the same circumstances.* We cannot so much as fancy such a thing, without supposing them *better-natured, or more gracious*, either of which is at best a reproach to our selves. And this is but reasonable for us to think, although we consider not the influence of God in the case, who hath told us, *That he who stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, he also shall cry, and not be heard*; and hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and can easily shut them up (in judgment) against the cries of those who have sinfully stopped their ears against the cries of those who have cried to them in their distress. Hence it follows, that it is but reasonable for us in these cases thus to conclude. I have now a fair estate, but it is subject to decay, a fire may consume it in a moment, soldiers may devour it, either in my or my childrens days: I have now an healthy body, sound and perfect limbs, I may grow sickly, lose my limbs, my senses, and be brought into the condition of a receiver, who am now a giver. Why should I think that any should consider me, or mine in such circumstances, more than I consider others? Let me therefore do unto others, as I would have others do unto me:

me: I have no reaſon to look, that it ſhould be meted to me again, better meaſure then I meaſure unto others. But I have dwelt too long upon this firſt, ſhewing you how the Providence of God doth often retaliate hard-heartedneſs, by ſuffering the hearts of others to harden againſt men in ſtraits, who have ſtop't their ears againſt the cries of others to them in diſtreſs.

2. But there are *other kinds of uncharitableneſs*, which God doth ordinarily repay in their kind. *Thoſe are acts, bearing the higheſt oppoſition to charity*, tending to the utter ruin and deſtruction of their brethren: ſuch as *murthers, cruelties*, and *barbarous and inhumane uſage of others*. We ſhall find in the old Law, that God in divers caſes eſtabliſhed a *law of Retaliation*. If any miſchief followed ſuch a ſtriking a woman with child, as cauſed a miſcarriage, God ordained they ſhould give *eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, ſtripe for ſtripe*, Exod. 21. 23, 24, 25. and in the caſe of a falſe witneſs there was ſuch a law, *Deut.* 19. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. which you may read at your leiſure. It was Gods will, that a witneſs who had teſtified falſly againſt any man, (if he were once found a falſe witneſs) ſhould ſuffer the very ſame thing that the other ſhould have ſuffered. So that throughout all the *Jewiſh period*, the Providence of God did (ordinarily) execute this Juſtice by the hands of Magiſtrates. But you muſt not miſtake to think this rule of God was without exceptions; for oftentimes exceptions were made with reſpect to the quality of the perſons, and this by the Law of God, *Exod.* 21. 16. *He that curſed his father or mother, was to dye the death*: that now was more than like for like: and *ver.* 26. *If a maſter had ſtruck a ſervant, and put out his eye, the maſters puniſhment was only to manumit his ſervant, not to pay eye for eye*: the reaſon was the diſparity of perſons. I might obſerve to you, that the Providence of God directed other Magiſtrates, then thoſe he ſet up amongſt his own people, to enact laws, to render like for like: in many caſes eſpecially, where offences were eminently againſt *mercy* and *charity*, (though with the like reſpect to perſons and other circumſtances) which is enough (by the way) to evidence the juſtice of ſuch laws in many caſes. But further, the Providence of God, in this retaliating ſins of this nature, is eminent in thoſe whom he took to puniſh with his own hand. In the caſe of *Pharaoh*, he cruelly cauſed the male-

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infants of the *Jewish* children to be drowned; God causeth him, and his host to be swallowed up in the red Sea. In the case of *Adonibezek*, *Judg.* 1. 6. *The Israelites took him, and cut off his thumbs, and great toes.* You never read that the *Israelites* served any Enemy so, either before or after that time; and doubtless what they did, was by an extraordinary instinct from God. *Ver.* 7. *Adonibezek* acknowledgeth the hand of God in it, *Threescore and ten Kings* (saith he) *having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me,* 1 Sam. 15. 33. When *Samuel* cometh to slay *Agag* by Gods Commandment, observe what he saith, *As thy sword hath made many women childless: so this day thy mother shall be made childless as to thee, and he cut him in pieces before the Lord.* And this is that which God hath said, *Rev.* 13. 10. *He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword, shall be killed with the sword:* and in *Rev.* 18. 6. speaking of mystical *Babylon* (by which our Forefathers have understood *Rome*, though late Authors have otherwise endeavoured to interpret it), and the fall of it, saith God, *Reward her even as she hath rewarded you, and double unto her double, according to her works; in the cup which she hath filled, fill her double.* You see still those whom God hath thus punished from time to time, have ordinarily been great offenders against *mercy* and *charity*, great actors of cruelty; the wickedness of these men, God hath ordinarily retaliated, and payed them in their own kind. I have hitherto justified the first part of my observation, that God very ordinarily doth repay eminent sinners against charity in their own kind; what hath been wanting, there's hardly any observing Christian but will be able to make up in his daily observation; 'tis very seldom but God gives cruel and bloody, and mischievous men blood to drink, and cruelty to digest; if he gives it not to them, he ordinarily doth it to their children, as he did to *Saul*, and to *Ahab*, and to *Jehu*. *Sauls* children were hang'd by *David* at Gods command, for his bloody house; *Ahab's* seventy Sons were slain for his bloodshed and cruelty. And God repaid the blood which *Jehu* shed in *Jesreel*, (though in it he executed Gods counsel) unto his children, as the Prophet saith expresly. God gave *Manasses* his children (*Josiah* only excepted) blood to drink, to requite him for his filling of *Hierusalem with innocent blood.*

2. Let

2. Let me now juſtifie the Obſervation as to the ſecond part of it. *Gods retaliation of charity:* Charity is a word of a very vaſt extent, and comprehendeth under it all acts of kindneſs done unto our brethren, ſtanding in need of our help. It is a ſaying I have met with ſomewhere, *A man ſeldom himſelf experienceth in himſelf, that miſery which he hath truly felt in others.* Many great and exceeding pretious promiſes are made to it, as if it were all *Godlineſs*; what the Apoſtle ſaith of *Godlineſs*, is applicable unto it. *It hath promiſes both of this life, and that which is to come. Bleſſed are the merciful* (ſaith our Saviour, *Mat* 5.7.) *for they ſhall receive mercy: He that giveth to the poor ſhall not want*, Prov. 28. 22. *I have been young* (ſaith *David*) *and now am old; yet I never ſaw the righteous forſaken, nor their ſeed begging their bread: he is ever merciful, and lendeth, and his ſeed is bleſſed.* It were a great work to reckon up all the promiſes of this nature, made to *mercy* and *charity*, ſo many that the hard-hearted, the niggardly-handed perſon, muſt neceſſarily be either an Atheiſt, or a notorious Unbeliever, either not believing there is any ſuch God, as the Scriptures ſpeak, or ſuch Scriptures as are the word of God; or not daring to truſt God upon his word; either of them hath a ſoul in ſtate bad enough. But my work is to ſhew you how the Providence of God juſtifieth this word. I told you before how *David* obſerved it in the whole courſe of his life, he never ſaw ſuch a man forſaken, nor his poſterity beggers. What an experience was that? he was a good man, a wiſe and obſerving man, much acquainted with the world; he had ſeen more than moſt of us, he lived to be an old man; he doth not ſay he had rarely ſeen, no, that was too little. *I have been young*, ſaith he, *and now am old, I never ſaw the righteous forſaken.* If you would know what righteous man he means, he telleth you, *One that is ever merciful and lendeth.* I think in this caſe we may as to the motions of Providence diſtinguiſh (as St. *Paul* doth in another caſe between a *righteous man*, and a *good man*, *Rom.* 5.) The Providence of God doth ſometimes ſo order it, that we ſee religious men, (though it is a hard task, I would not willingly be employed in it, to reconcile an hardneſs of heart in this kind to Religion); yet ſo it is, that we find ſometimes perſons, that in other things we cannot ſay, but they are devout, religious men, and juſt men, and (were it not for that of St. *John*, *how dwelleth the love of God in him?* after a very

imperfect manner certainly; his brother can scarce tell how) for that of St. *James*: *He that keeps the whole law, and* (in the constant track and course of his life) *offends but in one point, is guilty of all.* One would think they had love for God, and were righteous men: yet when you come to them for an act of charity, oh it grateth them, a six-pence comes at two or three pulls, and with many a grudg and excuse. You may possibly see such a man decay (God distributes his estate, because he would not), and such a mans seed you may see begging bread: But for a good man, *one that dispersеth abroad, and gives to the poor*, Prov. 3. 9, 10. *David* never saw such a mans seed begging their bread: and 'tis no wonder, thousands of men grow poor by lending; *but he that gives to the poor, lends to the Lord* (saith *Solomon*): never any man *lost by that lending*. The great God never yet failed, never yet was unfaithful. I could fill your ears with stories. I will only give you one or two. It is reported in the life of that famous *Junius*, Minister in *France* and *Holland*, he died but in the year 1602; he met with the Lot of many godly Divines in all ages, as well as ours, and came to be pinched with want, and resolved for the supply of his necessities, every each day to dig in the Town-ditch. But see the Providence of God, there lived near a Taylor, a young man, whose Mother had in *France* lived near to this *Junius*'s mothers house, and being very poor, *Junius*'s mother had often relieved her. Her son remembreth this kindness, and though but a poor man, inviteth *Junius* to his house, and provideth meat and lodging for him for seven months. I could tell you many, and strange stories of Gods repaying Charity in its kind, of little pieces of silver given in this kind, repaid with an hundred fold, even in this life. But this is an observation which justifieth it self in the experience of every one of you. I shall rather shew you the reasonableness of this motion of Divine Providence, which will be evident to you. I will open it to you in five particulars:

1. *God doth this to evidence his general love to mankind, and special care of Providence for the needy, the poor, and the fatherless, the stranger, and the widow.* Justice and Charity are the two pillars of the world, all humane society is dependent upon them: *Justice*, because as I told you before from *Solomon*, oppression makes the wise-man mad, mens spirits will never be calm under a course of oppression; hence Tyrants must have con-

conſtant ſtanding-armies to ſecure their luſts. The *Turkiſh* Empire is little but *injuſtice* and *oppreſſion*, it could not ſtand but for his *Janizaries*. *Charity* is another pillar of the Earth, the reaſon is, becauſe as our Saviour told us, *The poor we ſhall have always with us*. Now God ſheweth his great love to ſocieties of men in eminent upholding of both theſe. And beſides, the Scripture ſpeaketh God to have taken the ſpecial patronage of the poor, and needy, the ſtranger, and widow, and fatherleſs. God doth this by raiſing them up friends, and it is a great means to raiſe them friends, to incourage them by ſenſible rewards, and that of the ſame kind.

2. It is neceſſary, *that* (as our Saviour oft ſaith) *all righteouſneſs ſhould be fulfilled*. The *promiſes* might have a being given them. I told you before, that the promiſes made to *mercy* and *charitableneſs* are very many; now ſome of theſe promiſes are made for a term within this life: *He ſhall not lack* (ſaith *Solomon*:) that muſt be a promiſe reſpecting reward in this life: and ſo for the threatnings againſt cruelty and hard-heartedneſs towards them in miſery, or that exerciſe any barbarous dealings towards their brother; ſo that it is neceſſary God ſhould in this life retaliate ſuch wickedneſs.

3. It is neceſſary *for the terror of ſuch ſorts of ſinners*. God himſelf gives this as one of his ends in eſtabliſhing the law of *Retaliation* in the caſe of falſe witneſſes, *Deut.* 19. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. *And thoſe which remain, ſhall hear and fear, and from henceforth commit no ſuch evil more amongſt you*. The moſt of men hearing that *Adonibezek*, who cut off ſo many Princes *thumbs* and *great toes*, came to be ſerved in the ſame kind himſelf, are afraid of ſuch kind of Inhumanity.

4. Again, It is neceſſary for the *conviction of unbelievers*. There are many ſins, againſt which there are dreadful Revelations of Divine Wrath in holy Writ, and the Providence of God gives them a being every day: but yet ſinners will not believe when they ſee the vengeance that comes upon them, that God deſigns to puniſh them for their *unmercifulneſs* and *cruelty* to their brethren; no, *all things fall alike to all men*, and thoſe that judg otherwiſe, are with them in no better repute, than as bold priers into the ſecrets of God, and judges of his Counſels. God therefore will pleaſe ſometimes to write their ſin in their plague. It ſhall be wrote over the Gallows *fifty cubits high*, upon which

Haman was hanged: this was the Gallows which he prepared for *Mordecay*. The accusers of the three Children shall be thrown into the same fiery furnace, which they had caused to be heated for the three children; and *Daniel*'s accusers into the same *den of Lyons*, in which they would have had him perished: *He that leadeth into captivity, shall be led into captivity: and he that killeth with the sword, shall be killed with the sword.* When men see this, if they will believe any thing, they will believe this.

5. Lastly, It is also reasonable, *for the more perfect demonstration of Gods favour to these exercises of grace and vertue.* Our Saviour saith, *All men have not faith.* The most of men live, either *meerly* by *sense*, or by *reason.* The promises of a reward of Heaven, are matters of faith. A true believer, only from these, understands Gods favour to *merciful men*; his faith *being the evidence of things not seen*, indeed, evidenceth to him Gods love sufficiently. Inward rewards of grace, are like the *new-name* given unto the People of God, only known to them that have them. The most of men are acted by sense, and convinced by that mostly, (for in this case Reason will do little). God is therefore pleased to reward such persons to great degrees in this life, and that in the same kind too, that all the Earth may know what he will do for such persons. But I come to the Application, which I shall dispatch in two branches, making it a foundation.

Use 1. First, for *Admonition to all that hear me, to take heed of these sins.* I would have you brethren take heed of all sin, for the *wages of every sin is* (without repentance) *eternal death*; but especially take heed of sins eminently against charity. *Take head of stopping your ears against the cry of the poor*: God will be even with you; you, or yours shall cry, and not be heard. It is a woful folly for a man so to govern himself in his Conversation, as if he were not subject to changes; it speaketh the man that doth it, to be void of understanding; and it is a most unreasonable madness for a man to expect that from another, which himself would not do to another. *Abraham* checks *Dives* in the parable, for thinking that *Lazarus* should go to fetch him a cup of cold water, when-as he in his life-time would not afford him a cup of drink: take heed of *cruelty*,

of

of false-witnessing, of any eminent act of uncharitableness. Remember, *he that sheweth no mercy*, when he comes to need it, shall have judgment without mercy for his portion. Take heed of *persecuting* good people for their conscience-sake towards God; it may be you may take the advantage of a furious time, and plunder them a little, or get them imprisoned or oppressed, directly contrary to what is law and justice, or directly contrary to the highest law, which is the Law of God: but if you do, it is ten to one, but as your hands sent many to bed, without bread for themselves and their children to eat, to sleep, without a bed to lye upon, to work, without a tool to work with; so God will find hands, shall requite it into your bosom: Or if you should contribute *to make the wives of your brethren widows, and their children, fatherless, and vagabonds*, in a good sense to seek bread out of desolate places; God ere long will stand over your houses, and say, *Let these mens children be fatherless, and their wives widows: let their children be continual vagabonds in the earth, and beg, and let them seek their bread out of their desolate places: Let the extortioners catch all they have, and let the strangers spoil their labour: let there be none to extend mercy unto them, neither let there be any to favour their fatherless children: Let the iniquity of their fathers be remembred with the Lord.* It was the curse, *Psal.* 109. 9. And for what cause? they were *adversaries without a cause to David, while he gave himself unto prayer*, ver. 4. *They rewarded him evil for good, and hatred for his love.* Oh! my heart akes to think what judgments many in these days have laid up for themselves, and their wives and children: they have shewed no mercy, they, or some of theirs will find judgment without mercy: God hateth cruelty, and the sons of violence his soul abhorreth.

Use 2. This observation calleth aloud to you for the *exercises of charity and mercy.* They are virtues, or graces, the exercises of which, God will not only certainly reward; but he maketh haste to their reward, he ordinarily lets not their reward sleep. As it is said of some sinners, *Their damnation sleepeth not:* so as to some exercise of grace and vertue, it is such a sweet savour in the nostrils of God, that their recompence shall not sleep till the resurrection. Let me not hear a mouth opened amongst my brethren, nor see a purse-string tyed

tyed against an act of charity and mercy, it grateth upon my ears. Sirs, give me leave to tell you, that God never came more on borrowing, than he doth in this age. Troops of Robbers have robbed God: they have robbed his Servants, and God accounteth what is done to them, as done to himself. Anon it may be, before these are gone, another comes, and tells you, that such a Town is burnt down to the ground, many hundred Families undone, God sends to you for some help for them. Anon another comes to tell you, God hath sent to borrow a little of you for such a poor servant of his, who hath not spent his estate in Luxury, but God hath blasted him. Possibly God sends another to you, to lend him a little for another, that is under the Physitians hand, or under the Surgeons hand, and hath spent all his or her estate. O lend it: *He that gives to the poor, lends to the Lord, and he will repay.* Say not (as many of you do) when such come to borrow of you, as you have no mind to lend any too, *Truly I have no money, I can spare from my necessary occasions*: When the truth is, thou hast no money thou art willing to lend such a person God sends on borrowing to thee. He that hath given thee all that thou hast, hath sent to thee, to lend him a few shillings, a few pence, he hath sent us his Ministers upon his errand, or some poor servant of his; but he hath sent us with a ticket under his hand, which thou knowest, thou ownest his written word, his holy Scriptures: *Say not thou hast no money*, if it be true indeed, it is a good excuse; *or none that thou canst spare from thy necessary occasions*; if that be true too, it is a good excuse: but take heed it be true (remember the case of *Ananias* and *Saphira*). What mean *the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen*? What mean thy *garments of silk, thy costly laces, thy feasting, thy faring deliciously every day?* I do not blame these things, where there are estates to bear them out; soft rayment may be worn in Princes houses: but then, say not thou hast no money, no money for to buy a cap to keep thy brother from the cold, and yet money to buy a costly periwig? no money to help thy brother to buy so much bread, as to keep him from starving? and yet hast thou money to furnish thy table with varieties and dainties? hast thou no money to help a poor Christian to buy cloathes to cover his nakedness? and yet hast thou

money

money to laviſh out to cloath thy ſelf and family with ſilks and fine linnen? haſt thou no money to lend to thy Lord, to relieve one of his priſoners? to buy them a bed to lye on, to recover them a ſeat to ſit down upon? and yet canſt thou find enough to buy thy ſelf a cupboard of plate, or the moſt coſtly houſhold-ſtuff? O take heed that God judgeth not, that thou haſt *no heart*, thou canſt not truſt that God thou ſo much talkeſt of, and art no more than a prating Chriſtian. But, my brethren, remember, that acts of *mercy* and *charity*, are ſuch as God ordinarily retaliateth in this life; it is ſeldom that God putteth men to truſt him to another world for rewards in theſe things. It is a time to ſpeak, and I muſt ſpeak in this caſe. It is reported of holy Mr. *Bradford*, that in an hard time he ſold his *Chains, Rings, and Jewels to relieve thoſe in want.* It is reported of *Baſil*, that in a famine once he ſold all the lands and goods he had to relieve the poor. I ſhall add no more, but conclude my diſcourſe as that of our Saviour; *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.* He that believeth what he hath heard this day, and ſearching the Scripture, finds it true, let him be up and doing accordingly. But if any man believeth not the word of God, nor us his ſervants, but hath a mind to make an experiment, whether *Solomon* had any warrant from God to tell the world, *That he that ſtoppeth his ear to the cry of the poor, he alſo ſhall cry, and not be heard*; Let him at his peril try, whether *Solomon* or he was the wiſer man: I know I have ſpoke to many obedient ears, if there be any other, I ſo far my ſelf am aſſured of what I have ſaid, That in theſe things, *Let them do what they pleaſe, I and my houſe* ſhall deſire both to *obey and fear the Lord.*

SERMON XXIV.

Psalm CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I Am still communicating to you, some Observations which I have made, concerning the motions of Divine Providence, not only for your instruction, but to quicken you also to make Observations your selves upon the motion of it, that you may increase in spiritual Wisdom. I proceed to a Tenth Observation.

Observ. 10. *That the Providence of God is eminently seen in the preservation and protection of his faithful Ministers; and such, both amongst them, and other orders of men, who keeping themselves within the latitude of their duty, have been great adventurers for God in their generations.*

1. The Providence of God preserveth both man and beast; it is God that upholdeth our souls in life, and there is no man but in him *lives, moves,* and hath his *being.*

2. Nor is there any man that liveth any considerable time in the world, and keepeth any ordinary record of his life; but will see reason, as to say (with *David*) *O Lord! I am fearfully and wonderfully made*; so also, *Lord, I have been fearfully and wonderfully preserved.* But yet (as I have shewed you) there are *specialties of Divine Providence:* some persons that the Lord seemeth to carry upon *eagles wings*, and to preserve in a more eminent and special manner; sometimes in a way of miraculous Providence, sometimes in a way of extraordinary Providence, in a way beyond other men. Now I have long since hinted you three sorts of men, whom God thus preserveth.

1. *Such as are Gods Vicegerents, Magistrates, and Rulers of others.* This I have abundantly shewed you, when I shewed

you

you how eminently the Providence of God is seen, both in discovering, and bringing to light; and also in punishing such sins, as tend to the eminent disturbance of humane Societies.

2. *Such as God useth for the Ministers of his Word.* 3. *Such as make the boldest adventures for God, and in his service, keeping themselves within the latitude of their duty.* I am to justifie now this Observation to you. I will open it, and prove it, then shew you the reasonableness of Divine Providence in these extraordinary motions. And lastly, I shall make some Applications. First, let me open it to you.

1. *It is to be understood of godly, faithful, and painful Ministers, and mostly of such, of whom God hath made, or doth make, or intend to make an eminent use in his Church.* As there are no persons more justly a *hatred in the house of God*, abominable to all men of any sobriety, then leud, or lazy Ministers; so there is nothing of any special Providence promised to them, and it is more than I have observed, if God, as to their issues in the concerns of this world, hath not left them to a common share with others; and if there hath been any difference made by his Providence, it hath been to their disadvantage; they are more vile than others, and dishonour God more than others; and God often makes them and their families to smart more than others. It is that which God hath said in the case, *Them that honour me, I will honour: and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed*, 1 Sam. 2. 30. We have had a great deal of enquiry in the times wherein we live, into the causes of the *contempt of the Clergy*, *Lev.* 10. 2, 3, 4; one hath gueſt this thing, another that; for my own part, I have been young, and am growing old, I never yet knew a *painful able preacher, living an holy and exemplary life*, be his perswasion what it would, under a greater contempt than other men: there are some Sons of *Belial* will contemn all that are not as much *Atheists* as themselves. If Ministers will regard nothing but *striking their flesh-hook with three teeth* into the Lords pot, to feed themselves; if they will heap up parsonage upon parsonage, till there be no room left in the Earth; and grasp more souls than they can manage, putting out some to pitiful nurses, where they are starved, and affording the other but dry beasts; if they will make themselves vile, like *Hophni* and *Phineas*; it is no wonder if they be contemned by men of any sobriety. The Psalmist, *Psal.* 15. 4. makes it the mark of one

that ſhall dwell in Gods holy hill, *in whoſe eyes a vile perſon is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord*; for others, God ſecureth their honour eminently.

2. *Nor is it to be extended to every godly Miniſter, and at all times.* The beſt of Miniſters have their perſonal ſin, for which God may puniſh them by the common fate of others; God eminently ſhewed himſelf for *Moſes* and *Aaron* in the caſe of *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram:* he made the Earth to open its mouth, and to ſwallow up their oppoſers; but when they had provoked the Lord at the waters of *Meribah*, they took their common fate with the reſt of the *Iſraelites*, and dyed in the wilderneſs, when they had had no more than a proſpect of the promiſed land. Several inſtances might be given of eminent Prophets of old, and Miniſters of the Goſpel, that have periſhed in common judgments: more eſpecially when it hath pleaſed God to pick out ſome of them for *Martyrs*, and to make them witneſſes with their blood, to ſeal the Truths they have preached. And indeed this ſpecial Providence of God hath been moſt remarkable, in times, when God hath been beginning ſome great work, which was the caſe of the Apoſtles in the firſt Plantation of the Goſpel; and of thoſe eminent ſervants of God, which ſince that time he hath made uſe of in the *reformation of the Church*, or upholding the intereſt of pure and true Religion in a time of great Apoſtacy and defection.

3. *The ſpecial Providence of God hath not been ſeen uniformly in thoſe caſes, but ſeveral ways.*

1. *Sometimes in providing food for them, and theirs, whereas otherwiſe they muſt have ſtarved*, or at leaſt been ſo employed, as they could not have attended the work of God upon their hands.

2. *Sometimes in keeping them from ſuch dangers*, which have been very near to them, plucking them as brands out of the fire.

3. *Sometimes in the delivering of them out of their Enemies hands*, reſcuing them from the Lyon, when they have been in his paws: ſometimes one way, ſometimes another, accordingly as it hath pleaſed the infinite wiſdom of God to work for them.

1. *The Providence of God hath been eminently ſeen in the providing of neceſſaries for his Miniſters.* I need not tell you what ſpecial Laws God made in the caſe of his Miniſtry among the

Jews:

Jews; his *Prieſts* and *Levites* were particularly taken care of: but this being the ſetled maintenance for thoſe that were employed about the Tabernacle, and the Temple, when the Prieſts were generally corrupted, and God to uphold a faithful Miniſtry amongſt his people, raiſed up ſome extraordinary Prophets, that ſhould faithfully reveal his will unto people, they had little or no advantage, but the Lord never failed to provide for them. He provideth a *Shunamite*, 2 King. 4. 10, that provideth a *little chamber, a bed, a table, a ſtool, and a candle-ſtick for Eliſha.* And another widow for *Elijah*, that had faith enough to believe, that in the time of famine her *little meal* ſhould not fail from her *barrel*, nor *her oyl* from her cruſe: He commanded the Ravens to feed the ſame Prophet by the brook *Chereth*, 1 *King.* 17. 14. & 4. 6. When the brook was dried up, then the Lord commanded the widow to ſuſtain him, *verſ.* 9. The whole time of the *Kingdom of Iſrael*, from the time that *Jeroboam* revolted, until they were carried away captive, was a ſad time to faithful Miniſters; for all ſuch ſtood for the inſtituted worſhip of God, in oppoſition to that at *Dan* and *Bethel*; but of all that time, the time of *Ahabs* reign was the moſt perillous time: but then God had provided an *Obadiah, who took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water*, 1 King. 18. 5. Under the Goſpel, God alſo declared his will for the maintenance of his Miniſters. That tythes under the Goſpel are due, *jure divino*, to the Miniſter, I dare not ſay; but that a certain and honourable maintenance is due to them, the Apoſtle puts beyond all diſpute, 1 *Cor.* 9. And if the government of a nation ſettleth it by way of tythes, there is no queſtion to be made of the lawfulneſs, either of giving or taking them: but as the beſt eſtabliſhments are ſubject to mens corruptions; ſo is this.

The ſtory of *Merline*, a *French* Miniſter, is a known ſtory; being forced ſeveral days to ſave his life, by hiding himſelf in a *hay-mow*, God ſends an Hen every day, that laid an egg by him, upon which he lived. The ſtory of *Junius* I told you, relieved by a *Taylor*, when he was put to work in the Town-ditch for a livelihood: God raiſed up a *rich Matron* to provide for *Origen* and his family. But what need we look back ſo far for inſtances, of which all Eccleſiaſtical ſtory is full; when we have ſuch

a plentiful teſtimony at home. There is no order of men, that God in all ages of the Church hath ſo ſtrangely and (miraculouſly almoſt) provided for, as to the neceſſaries of life, as for ſuch who have been faithful and painful labourers in the work of his Goſpel; they have not been forſaken, their ſeed have in no ſcandalous manner begged their bread: but this is but one particular.

2. A ſecond head of inſtances, which I ſhall give you to prove this ſpecialty of Divine Providence, ſhall be the *preventing Providences of God*, warning them ſome way or other, of evil that hath been towards them, ſo as they have been able timely to prevent or eſcape it. *Elijah* was you know an eminent Prophet of the Lords, and his life was often in danger; but God hid him one while at the brook *Cherith*, 1 *King.* 17, after he had delivered that unpleaſing Prophecy to *Ahab*; another time, at *Beerſheba*, after he had made ſuch an havock amongſt the Prieſts of *Baal*, Chap. 18, 19. God gave him warning of his dangers, and prevented *Jezebel's* deſigns. A boy overhears *Pauls* Enemies conſpiring his death, and revealeth it, and he is ſent away: at another time he is let down in a basket. Infinite inſtances might be given you out of other ſtory. *Athanaſius* amongſt the ancients, and *Luther* amongſt more modern Divines, were eminent inſtances of this nature. God indeed (as I told you before) doth not make all his Miniſters in times of dangers, ſuch inſtances of ſpecial Providence, but only ſuch as he hath deſigned to make great and eminent uſe of.

3. I might alſo give you as large a proof of this ſpecial Providence of God, for the Miniſters of his Goſpel, *in his deliverance of them out of trouble*, when they have been within the paws of the Lyon, and ready to be devoured. And this not always in the ſame method, nor by the ſame way and means; ſometimes miraculouſly, as in the caſe of *Eliſha*, and *Elijah*, more than once, ſtriking their Enemies with blindneſs, cauſing fire to come down from Heaven, and to deſtroy their Enemies. In the caſe of *Daniel*, ſtopping the mouths of the Lyons. In the caſe of *Peter*, the very night before that *Herod* was fully intended to have murthered him. In later ſtory we have infinite inſtances

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of Gods ſtrange deliverance of faithful Miniſters (whom it afterward appeared, God deſigned to make eminent uſe of) out of their Enemies hands. I remember in the Hiſtory of the perſecution of the Church of *Bohemia*, we read of an Edict made by *Ferdinand*, to apprehend all the Proteſtant-Miniſters; upon which many fled into *Moravia*, and hid themſelves; three were taken and kept priſoners in a deep dungeon at *Prague*: but God by hi Providence wrought the eſcape of one of them, whom he made uſe of to plant, not leſs than twenty Proteſtant-Churches afterwards in *Poland*. But there would be no end, if I ſhould begin to recite to you all we find in his ſtory of this nature; there can be none ſo meanly acquainted with Scripture or Hiſtory, but may confirm himſelf in this obſervation. But I added, *That the Providence of God hath been alſo eminently ſeen in the preſervation of thoſe, who have been great adventurers in the cauſe of God, within the latitude of their duty.* A man may adventure in the cauſe of God, and miſcarry in his adventure, and that in two caſes: 1. *When he adventures without a call from God.* 2. *When he governeth not himſelf in his adventure, by the reaſonable rules of prudence.* *Peter* made an adventure, when he drew out the ſword, and cut off the higheſt Prieſt's ſervants ear: *But our Saviour bid him put up the ſword into its ſheath again; for he that draweth the ſword* (being a private perſon) *ſhall periſh by the ſword.* *Peter* had no call to uſe the ſword in the caſe: The Magiſtrate hath a call to uſe the ſword in the execution of juſt laws. The Miniſter hath a call to uſe another ſword, *the ſword of the ſpirit*, which is the word of God. Every Chriſtian hath a call to ſerve and obey Magiſtrates, in what is juſt and lawful, and to perform thoſe duties, which in his private capacity he oweth unto God; to worſhip God in his family, and to meet often together in the congregation of Gods People, to hear the word, to partake of the Ordinances of God, *&c.* Now there are times when a godly Magiſtrate cannot do his duty in puniſhing of ſin, without the adventure of his reputation in a wicked world; the adventure of his eſtate, his life: when the Miniſter of the Goſpel cannot do his duty, nor the people theirs, without the like adventures: but you ſhall obſerve this very ordinary in the Providence of God, he ſtrangely watcheth over, and protecteth ſuch as have a ſpirit to make boldeſt adventures, and as ſtrangely rewardeth ſuch. You ſee it in the whole ſtory

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of Scripture, *Moſes* and *Aaron* were called to go in to *Pharaoh*, and to demand the diſmiſſion of the *Iſraelites*; God ſuffereth not *Pharaoh*, nor any of his Courtiers (notwithſtanding their threats) to do them any hurt. *Caleb* and *Joſhuah* adventure to bring up a good report of the land of *Canaan*, God protecteth them from the mutiny of the people, and they are the only two are ſuffered to go over into the promiſed land, *Numb.* 14. 6, 7, 10, 24. *Elijah*, the *three children*, and *Daniel* were great adventurers in the caſe of God: ſo was *Eſther* in her going in to the King, to ſpeak for the *Jews*: ſo were the Apoſtles in the firſt Plantation of the Goſpel. The Providence of God ſtrangely watched over them, and delivered them, as you read in the ſtory of their Acts. A man cannot be too bold, if he keeps within the latitude of his duty. Indeed we read of ſome whom God ſtrangely watched over, in the doing of ſome actions, that we cannot evince to have been their duty, as that of *Phinehas*, *Numb.* 25. 7, 8. *in killing the Moabitiſh-woman, and the Iſraelite in the act of adultery.* That of *Elijah's* killing *Baals* Prieſts, 1 *King.* 18; yet God protected them, and rewarded them; there are many things ſaid in the defence of *Phinehas* and *Elijah*, to reduce their actions to the ordinary rule of Juſtice. It is certain, that by the Laws of God, the adulterers ought to have dyed, ſo alſo the falſe Prophets; but for the perſons that executed the vengeance of God upon them, all that we can ſay, is this: *Their call was doubtleſs clear to themſelves, their actions were moſt certainly approved by God:* he protects them upon the doing of them, he rewards them for doing of them; but *non fuerunt ordinaria, ſed facta quædam extra uſum, & ordinem communem*; they were not ordinary actions, but depended upon a ſpecial call of God. By vertue of ſuch a call too, it doubtleſs was, that *Moſes ſlew the Egyptian*, for which St. *Stephen juſtifieth him*, Acts 7. But a man cannot be too bold for God, if he keeps within the latitude of his certain duty.

2. Provided ſecondly, *He keepeth to reaſonable rules of prudence:* our rule obligeth us to be *wiſe as ſerpents.* But I will not enlarge upon this Theme; for the truth is, the Providence of God ſtrangely watcheth over bold adventurers in his cauſe and ſervice, who have acted under ſuch circumſtances, as are hardly reconcileable to what our reaſon calls Prudence; yet certainly, that will not warrant a raſh and imprudent managery

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of a good cauſe. I need not give you more inſtances than I have done, to juſtifie this Obſervation in ſacred Hiſtory. *Moſes* and *Aaron*, *Caleb* and *Joſhuah*, *Elijah* and *Eliſha*, *Eſther*, *Daniel*, the *three Children*, all the Apoſtles afford a plentiful proof of this Obſervation; and in other ſtories the inſtances are without number. *Luthers* whole life was an inſtance of this, the *Archers ſhot ſorely at him*, he ventured as high as any in oppoſition to them; *yet his bow abode in his ſtrength*, *Luther* dyed in his bed in peace.

Nor doth this ſeem an unreaſonable motion of Divine Providence, if we either conſider how far the honour of God is concerned in the upholding and maintaining his Embaſſadors, and rewarding his ſervants; or the faithfulneſs of God in juſtifying his promiſes, or the further uſe that God will make of men in the accompliſhment of his deſigns in the world.

1. Let us but conſider *the relation wherein the Miniſters of Chriſt ſtand to him*, they are his *Miſſionaries*, he hath ſent them; *as the father hath ſent him, ſo he hath ſent them*; nay, they are no ordinary ſervants, they are the Lords *Embaſſadors*, they come *in Chriſts name*, and as *in Chriſts ſtead* they intreat men to be reconciled unto God. It is beneath the honour of a Prince to ſuffer an Embaſſador to ſtarve, or any way to periſh for want of that protection which he is able to afford him; indeed, if any run before they are ſent, or inſtead of Gods work do their own, Gods honour is not concerned in them, unleſs to chaſtiſe their preſumption, and to take vengeance upon them, as in ſuch a caſe, no Prince would think himſelf further concerned: but ſuppoſing Miniſters of the Goſpel to be ſent by him, and to be ready faithfully to deliver their maſters meſſages (and this we muſt ſuppoſe and believe, or diſown the Scriptures, which expreſly aſſert this), God is highly concerned in point of honour (having power in his hand, and the command of all the hearts of men) to provide for his faithful Miniſters, and they ſhall not want.

2. God (ſecondly) is not only concerned in honour, as a great King and God above all; but as a God of *truth and faithfulneſs*, that can ſooner ſuffer Heaven and Earth to paſs away, then a word to fail of what he hath ſpoken: he hath made many promiſes to his faithful ſervants in the Miniſtry, and to thoſe that he hath employed in hazardous employments for him; he of old

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promiſed to *ſatiate the ſouls of his prieſts with fatneſs*, Jer. 31. 14. He of old appointed no inheritance to the ſons of *Levi*, amongſt their brethren, becauſe he was *their inheritance*, as he had promiſed them, *Deut.* 10. 9. he hath told them *he will cloath them with ſalvation*, Pſal. 132. 16. he told *Jeremiah* and *Ezekiel* he would be *with them to deliver them*, Jer. 1. 7, 8, 18, 19. *Ezek.* 2. 6. He hath told Goſpel-Miniſters, *he will be with them to the end of the world*, Matth. 28. he hath bidden them *take no thought what they ſhould eat, drink, or put on*, when he ſent out the twelve, *Matth.* 10. 9, 10. he bid them to provide, *neither gold, nor ſilver, nor braſs in their purſes, nor ſcrip for their journey, nor two coats, nor ſhooes, for the workman is worthy of his meat.* Now after all this, if God ſhould ſuffer his Miniſters to want bread to ſuſtain their lives, or their families, what would men ſay of the faithfulneſs of God?

3. Laſtly, Let us but conſider God, *as having many deſigns yet to accompliſh, a great deal of work yet to be done in the world, to be done by the hands of men*, who can imagine God ſhould not eminently protect, and provide for thoſe that are, and have been faithful? who would work for that Maſter, that will not find them bread? What ſubject would be free to go as an Embaſſadour for that Prince, that would never protect him in the faithful diſcharge of his truſt, or reward him proportionably to his affronts or loſſes? Now God knows that we are fleſh, and much led by our ſenſe and reaſon, and muſt not be encouraged to our duty only by rewards, which are the objects of our faith; but by ſenſible rewards, at leaſt to ſuch a proportion as is neceſſary to uphold us to our work. It is therefore not to be wondred at, that God ſhould in a way of ſpecial Providence, eminently take care of the Miniſters of his Goſpel: he hath call'd them, and ſent them to his work, he hath by that call taken them off from that purſuit of the world, by which others procure themſelves a livelihood; he hath told them they ſhould live upon his Altar; he hath told us, 1 *Cor.* 9. 7. *That no man goeth to a warfare at his own charge, none planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof, nor feedeth a flock, and eateth not the milk thereof:* he ſeeth them out of obedience and conſcience to him, refuſing the bread they might have: men will not provide for them, he will; *Ravens* ſhall bring them meat every day, but they ſhall be

be fed. This is but a reaſonable motion of Divine Providence. I ſhall make a ſhort Application of this diſcourſe.

Uſe 1. This in the firſt place *lets you ſee the fountain of that bounty, which the many painful and faithful ſervants of Chriſt have experienced in all times, and even in the days wherein we live.* It hath pleaſed God in all times to raiſe up friends to his faithful Miniſters. I remember when *Abigail* came to meet *David*, coming againſt her husband, and had ſtopt his journey, *David* ſaith unto her, 1 *Sam.* 25. 32. *Bleſſed be the Lord God of Iſrael, which ſent thee to meet me this day: and bleſſed be thy advice, and bleſſed be thou*, &c. Firſt, *he bleſſeth God*, then *he bleſſeth her*; the faithful ſervants of God, yea the Churches of God, who by this means enjoy any thing of the labours of their ſhepherds, have reaſon to bleſs thoſe whom God hath made his inſtruments to ſupport thoſe upon whom others had no pity. Yea verily, and what our Saviour ſaid of the woman that ſpent her box of Oyntment upon him, I think I may apply here, *Wherever the Goſpel is preached, what they have done ſhall be told for a memorial of them.* If a cup of cold-water for a thirſty Prophet ſhall obtain a Prophets reward, the greater kindneſſes of many ſhall certainly be rewarded; they have but put a little money into the bank which God keeps in Heaven. But we have more reaſon to look upward to him, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and openeth them as he pleaſeth. God hath in it ſhewed his ſpecial Providence for his faithful Miniſters; let us therefore ſay, *Bleſſed be the Lord God of Iſrael, who hath ſtirred them up.* It was the grace of God *beſtowed upon the Churches in Macedonia, which taught them in a great tryal of affliction, and deep poverty, to abound in riches of liberality, and willingly of themſelves to give to their power, yea and above their power.* 2 Cor. 8, 1, 2, 3. Let it be written to poſterity, for a memorial of the people in *England*, that for ſo many years together, in the midſt of a devouring peſtilence, many conſuming fires, expenſive wars, and a deadneſs of trade, they have refreſhed the bowels of ſo many hundreds (if not thouſands) of Gods meſſengers; but let God have all the glory, who hath given the heart, though their hands diſtributed the money.

Uſe 2. In the ſecond place, Let me cry out, *O houſe of Aaron, truſt in the Lord: O houſe of Levi, truſt in the Lord: Truſt in the*

Lord, and do good (ſaith *David*) *ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed*, Pſal. 37. 3. *Let us be faithful to our maſters ſervice, and do the work which he hath given us to do, and verily we ſhall be fed.* I cannot ſay God will provide *Coaches*, and delicate things for us; but neceſſaries we ſhall not want. Herein let us exerciſe our ſelves to keep a conſcience void of offence, both towards God, and towards men; and as to other things, we may truſt a *Providebit Deus*, God will provide for us and ours. The experience of theſe times, if wiſtly attended to, certainly is enough to keep any from being tempted through fear of want, to debauch their conſciences, by doing any thing which is apparently ſinful, or but ſo judged and ſuſpected by them. We ſee ſome fed with great proviſions, faring deliciouſly every day, whiles others (like *Daniel* and his partners) have been fed with little more than *pulſe* and *water*; and at the end of ſome years it appeareth, they look fairer, as to worldly circumſtances, than thoſe who have had far better commons.

Uſe 3. Laſtly, This obſervation commendeth *confidence and courage to all in the Lords work*, in oppoſition to fear and cowardiſe. I would not be miſtaken, be ſure in the firſt place you be in Gods work, that which by his word appeareth to be the duty of one in thy circumſtances: nothing but the conſcience of having been ſurpriſed in the way of our duty, will bear us up under ſufferings; be therefore in that point well ſatisfied: having done that, obſerve thoſe rules of Prudence which reaſon directs thee in ſuch caſes: this done, fear nothing. Remember the Providence of God moſt eminently watcheth over the boldeſt adventurers in the way of their duty. They are the words of our bleſſed Lord, *Mar.* 8. 35. *Whoſoever will ſave his life, ſhall loſe it: but whoſoever ſhall loſe his life for my ſake, and the Goſpel, ſhall ſave it.* They obſerve in war, that the ſoldier that turns his back, and flyes, is in much more danger, than he who ſtands to it; and that nothing makes a conqueror, ſo much as *reſolution*, and bold adventuring: it is ſo in our ſpiritual fight with the world; be then of good courage in it, and quit your ſelves like men; remember God is with you, and if ſo, there's more with you, than can be againſt you. God indeed in our combats with the world, doth not always keep us ſhot-free, and bring us off without a ſcratch; but thoſe whom he doth bring

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off, are ordinarily those who are most valiant and adventurous: however, it is better to fall valiantly, than cowardly; and our Lord hath told us, *That if a man will save his life, he shall lose it*; if he hath such a mind to sleep in a whole skin, that he will neglect his duty, and do that which his heart condemneth him for doing, he shall lose what he hoped to save by it, be it life, reputation, estate, *&c.* It speaketh great unbelief, and distrust in God, to be cowards in plain and certain duties. Be prudent, but take heed of forbearing necessary duty out of prudence, or being faint in the performance of it. That can be no prudence: *If a man fainteth in the day of adversity, Solomon* saith, *that his strength is but small*, his faith is but small, and his observation of Gods Providence in such cases hath been very small too. But I shall add no more upon this Argument.

SERMON XXV.

Psal. CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I Have done with the Tenth thing in the motions of Divine Providence, which I commended to your observation. I proceed now to another.

Observ. 11. *The Providence of God maketh a very frequent and remarkable use of the sins of people, though it be always spotless in making such use of mens sins.* That the Providence of God in bringing about the eternal purposes and counsels of God, doth very ordinarily make use of peoples sins, I have in a great measure already proved to you under my seventh Observation, where I shewed you how God accomplished his purposes upon *Mount Zion*, by persons that meant not so, and over-ruled the several lusts of sinners hearts to his own praise, *making the wrath*

of men to praiſe him. But yet I ſhall take it again in my way, and the rather, becau'e I will ſhew you more eſpecially what uſe God makes of the ſins of his own people. Then I ſhall give you a reaſonable account of this great work of God. And thirdly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew you, that *it is a ſpotleſs uſe* which God maketh, and open it to you, how it may be ſo, and our reaſon may conceive of it well enough. And laſtly, I ſhall make ſome Application.

That it is ſo, is ſo obvious to thoſe that are meanlieſt exerciſed in the Scriptures, that it can hardly be overlooked by any conſiderate perſon.

One of the moſt glorious products of *Actual Providence*, was the Revelation of the *Covenant of Grace and Redemption:* I ſay the Revelation of it; for the *paction*, or making of that Covenant, I take that to be eternal, and antecedent to the Creation: but as I take it, thoſe who would diſtinctly underſtand the *Covenant of Grace*, muſt diſtinguiſh betwixt the *Paction*, the *Exhibition*, and the *Revelation* of it, and the *Application* of it to individual ſouls. The *Paction* was an act of Counſel, an eternal act, a tranſaction between the *Father* and the *Son*; the Son as the head of the elect, ſtanding as a *ſurety* for *believers*, and undertaking ſomething for himſelf on their behalf; that in the *fulneſs* of time, he would come into the world, aſſume our natures, and in that nature dye, and give ſatisfaction to Divine Juſtice for the ſins of the elect: (which ſome call the *Covenant of Redemption*) alſo undertaking for them, that they in his ſtrength, and through the aſſiſtance of his ſpirit, ſhould do whatſoever his Father ſhould require perſonally of them, in order to their obtaining ſalvation through him. But now the *Exhibition* and *Revelation* of this eternal contrivement to the world, that was the work of *Actual Providence*, done in time ſubſequent to the Creation, and done *gradually*, as to the more full and perfect Revelation of it, according to the good pleaſure and infinite wiſdom of God. The firſt Revelation of it was to *Adam*, after he had fallen, *Gen.* 3. 15. *And I will put enmity betwixt thee* [that is the ſerpent] *and the woman, and betwixt thy ſeed and her ſeed, it ſhall bruiſe thine head, and thou ſhalt bruiſe its heel.* Now for this, God made uſe of the firſt ſin that was committed in the world, the fall of *Adam*: had not *Adam* fallen, there had been no need of the Revelation of a Covenant of Grace; he,

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and his posterity had been saved upon the Covenant of Works, he had perfectly done the Will of God, and lived, *Rom.* 9. 11, 12. The Apostle tells us, that before *Esau* or *Jacob* were born, before they had done good or evil, God loved *Jacob*, and hated *Esau*; and it was foretold, *That the elder should serve the younger*; Gen. 25. 3. for the law of God and Nature, had made the younger a servant to the elder. First, *Esau* sells his birthright for a mess of pottage; then *Jacob* by the counsel of *Rebeccah* comes, and tells his Father a lye, and obtaineth the blessing of the first-born: both sinful acts; the first on *Esau's* part, the second on *Jacob's*; but Gods Providence makes use of both, to bring about his counsels. There was a promise made to *Abraham*, that God would multiply his seed, and that they should inherit the land of *Canaan*: *Pharaoh* strongly sets himself against it, useth all arts to destroy the seed of *Jacob*; the King commandeth the midwives to kill all the *male children*, *Exod.* 1. they save them alive, the King questioneth them for it, *Exod.* 1. 17, 19. they tell a lye to excuse themselves; God makes use of their lye for the accomplishment of his counsels, and the fulfilling of his promise unto *Abraham*. Who can excuse *Rahab* in the lye she told to the Kings messengers, sent to apprehend the spies? It is true, the Apostle saith, she did it by faith, and God rewarded her, as he did the *Egyptian* midwives: *Rahab* did it *by faith*, believing what at that time she did not see, that God would give that land to the *Israelites*, and God rewarded her good intention in the general, not her particular sinful act: but yet the Providence of God made a great use of her lye, for the design he had in hand. Who can excuse *David* in many particular actions which he did? Which yet God made use of in order to the bringing about his counsels and promise concerning *David*, in settling him upon the Throne of *Israel* and *Judah*: The setting up of *Solomon* upon the Throne of his Father *David*, was an eminent product of Actual Providence; but *Bathsheba* you know was his mother, and *David* in order to the having her for his wife, murthered *Uriah* her husband, yet she was the mother of *Solomon*. No man can excuse *Jeroboam* in his revolt from the house of *David*, he did what he did from a very turbulent and ill spirit, and in a very irregular and rebellious manner: but God yet made use of what he had done to fulfil his own counsels, and the threatning he had denounced against *Solomon*. In short, in-

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numerable instances of this nature might be given, and it is an easie thing to observe God doing the same thing every day. I will instance but in three great products of Actual Providence more, which the Scripture maketh mention of; and three greater have not been, nor can be. 1. *The incarnation of our blessed Lord.* In the genealogy of Christ recorded by *Matthew*, chap. 1. ver. 3. you read, *Judas begat Pharez*, and *Zarah of Thamar*. You have the story *Gen.* 38. 29. *Pharez* was an incestuous child, which *Judah* had by his own Daughter-in-law: he was one of Christs Progenitors; so was *Bathsheba*, who came with much sin to be *David's* wife; yet God made use, you see, both of the sin of *Judas*, and the sin of *David*, for the bringing forth his son into the world. Next to his Incarnation, let us consider *the sacrifice of Christ for the expectation of our sins*, the noblest and greatest act of Providence which was ever brought forth in the world, it was produced by wicked hands. *Judas*, *Pilate*, *Herod*, the *Jews*, all have their hand in it. The Devil put the malice into the heart of *Judas*; but God had his end in the action, and accomplished the great design of his glory. The sending of the Gospel amongst the *Gentiles*, was a great product of Providence in the fulfilling of the Lords counsels, and many promises: but it was the *fall of the Jews*, that proved the riches of the world, as the Apostle tells us, *Rom.* 11. 11, 12. *They did not stumble that they might fall: but through their fall salvation came unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousie.* The Apostles upon their going out to preach to the *Gentiles*, gives this account of it, *Forasmuch as you have judged your selves unworthy of eternal life*, (that was, by not receiving the Gospel) *we turn unto the Gentiles*. What shall I need say more? there is no soul brought to Heaven, but is an eminent instance of this: *If they had not sinned, they would have no need of any pardon or justification* from the guilt of sin, no need of a Saviour or Mediator: God suffereth the souls of his People to be concluded under the guilt of sin, that he might have mercy upon them. It is also an ordinary observation of Divines, That God often suffereth people to fall into some gross and scandalous sins, that he might take that advantage to awaken them to repentance, and make use of their falls to a rising again to a new life: and this is often seen in those that have lived civilly, and might be prone to trust to their own Moral Righteousness. But I shall inlarge

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no further in the Juſtification of ſo obvious an Obſervation. It follows, that I ſhould ſhew you the reaſonableneſs of this motion of Divine Providence.

1. The truth is (in the firſt place), *it is hard to conceive, how otherwiſe ſome of Gods greateſt works of Providence could have been produced.* What would the Revelation of a *Covenant of Grace* have ſignified to the world, if the Covenant of Works had not firſt been violated by the firſt mans tranſgreſſion? How could elſe any man imagine, that the ſalvation of the world ſhould have been accompliſhed by the *death of Chriſt*, if God had not made uſe of the wicked action of thoſe who took him, and by wicked hands crucified him? The Apoſtle aſſureth us, that in all they did againſt our Lord, they did but execute *what the counſel of the Lord had predetermined ſhould be done: If ſin did not abound, how ſhould grace much more abound?* Rom. 5. In the pardon of ſins, the juſtification of a guilty ſoul; the Scripture tells us, *That all are concluded under ſin, that the promiſe by faith in Jeſus Chriſt might be given to them that believe.* What ſhould we ſay to the great work of Providence, in trying his Saints by *afflictions* and *perſecutions*, from the hands of violent men? God maketh uſe of the ſins of Perſecutors, to perfect his Saints by the exerciſes of their faith and patience; it could not be, without the ſins of thoſe who perſecute others *for righteouſneſs ſake.*

2. Again, *God by this getteth himſelf a great deal of glory.* I have ſpoke ſomething to this under the ſeventh Obſervation: but let me here add a little.

1. He gets himſelf the *glory of his power.* There is a fancy hath poſſeſſed the Philoſophers of the world, That metals of a baſer nature, may by art be turned into nobler metals, braſs, *&c.* into gold; and they will tell you, that ſome ſuch thing hath been done; and abundance of time and money hath been ſpent, by the vain and covetous Philoſophers of the world to little purpoſe, to find out this Philoſophers ſtone (as they call it): but ſuppoſing ſuch a thing poſſible; yet there muſt be ſome ſimilar quality to help, or they will not pretend to any ſuch thing; no Philoſopher ever yet pretended by all his *Chymiſtry*, to fetch gold out of a dunghil. But now in ſin, there is nothing of a ſimilar quality to the glory of God; there is nothing ſo oppoſite to the glory of God, as the ſins of men and women: For God to fetch

water out of a rock, argued great power; to raiſe up *Abraham* children from the ſtones of the field, it muſt ſpeak great power: but yet not ſo much, as for God to fetch his own glory out of peoples ſins. There is in ſin an infinite oppoſition to the glory of God: nothing ſo diametrically oppoſite to God's honour and glory, as ſin is. *Sampſon* put forth a riddle, *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the ſtrong came forth ſweetneſs.* But what is this riddle to that which I am ſpeaking of? for the glory of God to come forth out of the *dunghil*, the woful dunghil of the worſt of mens actions? for God to work out his own righteouſneſs out of the vileſt actions of men? O it ſpeaketh an infinite Power in God! it is a greater work to fetch *light* out of *darkneſs. I will* (ſaith God) *get me glory upon Pharaoh:* For God to get himſelf glory out of *Pharaoh's* hard heart, was more than to get his people water out of an hard rock.

2. *God by it gets himſelf the glory of his infinite wiſdom.* I told you in my former diſcourſe, that he is accounted the beſt Politician, that can make the beſt uſe of all humours, and ſerve his own deſigns, even of his utter Enemies: this is the top of a Politicians wiſdom: How great then muſt the Wiſdom of God appear in this? nothing hath ſuch an enmity to God and his glory, as ſin hath. *Job* ſpeaketh it to the great glory and honour of God, *Job* 5. 13. *He taketh the wiſe in their own craftineſs, and the counſels of the crafty are carried head-long.* It ſpeaketh the wiſdom of a man, that he can make uſe of the capacious quality of a bird, or a beaſt, to catch a prey for him: thus the *faulconer* maketh uſe of the hawk, the huntſman of the dog, the fiſher-man of a fowl, to catch birds, or beaſts, or fiſh for him. This I ſay ſpeaketh the wiſdom of a man above other creatures; O how it ſpeaketh the admirable Wiſdom of God, that he can make uſe of the worſt belchings of luſts in mens hearts, the moſt vile and rebellious actions of men, and out of them fetch his own glory.

3. But in the laſt place, *God above all doth by this magnifie the riches and freeneſs of his grace.* This is that wherein the Lord delights to have glory; *he predeſtinated, adopted us,* &c. *to the praiſe of the glory of his grace,* Eph. 1. 6. If God had taken man out of a ſtate of innocency into Heaven, we ſhould never have admired free-grace ſo much as now; it marvellouſly affects the heart of a child of God, to ſee God make uſe of his falls

falls of his sin and corruption, and manifold rebellions, to make his free-grace exceeding glorious. We should never so much admire free-grace and mercy, if we were not so great transgressors: This is it which maketh grace precious in our eyes, when we cry out of the belly of hell, and he heareth us.

Thus far I have shewed you, that God maketh a very ordinary use, and a very remarkable use of peoples sins. But I also added, that it was a *spotless use*; and thus it must be, if God maketh it; *For he that is of purer eyes, than that he can behold iniquity, must be of a purer will, than to will iniquity, and of purer hands than to work iniquity.* But the difficulty lyeth here. It is plain from this discourse, that God *useth peoples sins* as a *medium to his glory*; he having willed the end, must needs have *willed the means*: for though a thing may be fortuitous to man, yet nothing is fortuitous, or casual to God. A man now in order to the accomplishment of some design of his, may make use of some things which fall in, and he never foresaw, nor forethought, nor design'd as a means in order to his accomplishment, but it were blasphemy to suppose any such thing of God.

A great question there is amongst Divines, what influence God hath upon the sinful actions of men. It falleth not so fully in my way at present, as to engage me in any full discourse upon it. Certain it is, that the *holy God putteth malice into the heart of no man, nor doth at all incite him to any sinful actions.* This were indeed to make God the Author of sin: he commands it not (that is impossible), he approveth it not, he inclineth not the will of man unto it: But as certain it is,

1. *That he assisteth the faculties and members of a man to those natural actions*, which his own lust and malice maketh sinful. He assisted the tongues of *Ananias* and *Saphira* to speak, but it was their own lust and malice, which inclined them rather to speak that which was false, than the truth. *In him we live, move, and have our being.*

2. As certain it is, *That he permitteth and suffereth men to execute their lusts*, otherwise they could not execute them, he could most certainly hinder them: *Forty years he suffered the Jews manners in the wilderness*, Acts 13. 18. *He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*, Act. 14. 16. Now for this sufferance, I think it is well expressed by an eminent Divine of our own; *Gods permission of sin* (saith he) *lyes in the suspension of his own*

 efficiency,

efficiency, and the removal of the impediments. *Pelagians* dream, that God gave unto man a perfect freedom of will, and so did, as it were, *Dormitare in operibus suis*, sleep while his Enemies sowed the tares of sin; but no such thing must be imagined of God. Nor doth God only remove those impediments, by which the sinner might be hindred in his acts of sin; he is properly said to be hindred in an action, who cannot do what he hath a mind to do: now God doth something more in his permission of mens sins, than *not hinder* their commission of it; he *suspendeth* that *efficiency*, by which they were restrain'd, or which should incline them to do otherwise.

3. *He willeth that the sin should be, though he doth not will to effect it.* Indeed for God to will the effecting or committing of sin, is not consistent with the purity and holiness of God: God's permission of sin, and willing it in the effect, doth *ponere effectum non causam*, it doth assert the effect, not the cause; his willing it in this sense, doth by no means imply his procuring it, inciting to it, or approbation of it. It is not *procurans volitio*; and here Divines say rightly, *Deus absq; jactura, & sanctitatis offendiculo, velle potest pectata; vult rem effici, non effectum dare.* He willeth the thing should be done, but he doth not will the doing of it. Who shall dare to say that God did not will that *Judas* should betray Christ, and *Pilate* condemn him, and that the *Jews* should crucifie him? When the Apostle saith, *That they did but according to whatsoever Gods hand and counsel had determined before to be done*, Act. 4. 28. *And that he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledg of God*, Act. 2. 23. If God did not will that most vile action should be done, how did his *hand and counsel determine it?* How was he delivered by the counsel of God, which the Scripture expresly affirms? And this is all that I know, that Mr. *Calvin*, or any that tread in his steps have said, which many now a-days have so clamoured against, as if he made God the *Author of sin*, and *willed acts of sin*. Mr. *Calvin*, and all sober Divines will grant them, that it is inconsistent with the holy nature of God, to infuse malice into the hearts of any, or to incite any to any malicious and sinful action, or to assist them in the sinfulness and obliquity of their action: but those who have read *Pareus*'s disputes with the *Jesuites* at *Swalbach*, will easily understand, what *Divines* these men read, and with *whose heifers*

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they plow, and out of whose *quivers* they draw their arrows of bitter words. To whom the best answer, is that of the Archangel to the Devil, *The Lord rebuke them.*

4. Then lastly, *God governeth the wicked actions of men, when they are done to his own praise and glory*, and maketh an eminent use of them; but yet a spotless use. Take *Pharaoh* in his hardening of his heart, against the Will of God revealed to him for the dismission of the *Israelites*. God had purposed that *Pharaoh's* heart should harden, he tells *Moses* so long before it came to issue: God removed what might have hindred the hardening of his heart, he would believe from time to time, that God had done his worst, and he should keep them, let the mighty God do what he could: he suspended his own efficiency, he could have softned *Pharaohs* heart, if he had pleased; he *assisted* him to his natural actions, he could never else have spoken the words he did, nor made ready a Chariot. When the action was done, he governed it to his own praise and glory, he said, *I will get me glory upon Pharaoh*; and he did get himself glory upon him, and made *Pharaoh's* wrath to praise him. But I will add no more to the Explication, or proof of this Observation.

Use 1. This now in the first place may convince us of the infinite *power*, *wisdom*, and *goodness of God*. Omnipotency is usually thought to be most discovered in Creation, the production of things out of a meer not-being, into a being, where there is no pre-existent matter for God to work upon: but here seemeth yet to be a greater demonstration of Divine Power, for God to make the wrath of man to praise him, to bring forth the great designs of his glory out of mens sins. It sheweth us also the infinite wisdom of God. The natural sagacity of the bee is seen in sucking honey out of poysonous herbs and flowers, a thing of the sweetest taste out of flowers, and herbs of bittrest taste, and in doing it, it by its chymistry commendeth the wisdom of its Maker, who hath given it this natural skill. The acquired art and skill of the *Apothecary* and *Chymist*, who make the desperatest poysons, which have the greatest contrariety to humane nature, to serve for medicines, to heal mens diseases, commendeth the wisdom of God; for their God hath taught them this discretion. But oh the wisdom of God! to make our lusts, our wrath, our sins to praise him! there must be something of the

nature of honey in the herb or plant, or the bee could get none out of it; there must be something in the poysonous drug or plant, that is consonant to the nature of man, or all the art of the Chymist and Apothecary could never make it serve for mans cure or healing. But there is nothing in the nature of sin, but is quite opposite to the glory of God; yet God makes sin to praise him. O the heighth and depth of Divine Wisdom, yea and of Divine Goodness too! As there is nothing more opposite than sin to Gods glory, so there is nothing more pernicious and destructive to us: God makes our sins to serve us, to excite habits of grace, *repentance*, *faith*, *fear*, *watchfulness*, &c.

Use 2. In the second place, *Learn from hence, how impossible it is, that a sinner, by his rebellions against God, should do any hurt but to his own soul.* And this is enough to convince the most malicious sinner, of the exceeding vanity of sin. If *Julian* will in his rage throw his dagger up against Heaven, it shall not touch a star, but return only upon his own head. If the Princes of *Babylon* will heat a fornace seven times hotter than ordinary, and open a Lyons den to destroy the *Jewish* servants of God; the fornace shall only burn up, and the Lyons devour themselves. Indeed in regard of the sinfulness of the best of men, and Gods design sometimes to melt, and to try his people, the rage of sinful men doth sometimes reach them; but this is certain, it never reacheth Heaven, nor any of its counsels and designs, unless by the cry of it for vengeance against the sinners. God will have his glory from the vilest persons, and their vilest actions; and although *Assyria* meaneth not so, yet he shall but accomplish Gods pleasure. In 2 *King.* 6. you read a story of the King of *Syria*, his sending a party of Soldiers to take the Prophet, *ver.* 13. The Prophet, *ver.* 18, prayeth, that they might be smitten with blindness; they were so, and then the Prophet leadeth them into *Samaria*, into the midst of their Enemies. God deals thus with outragious sinners. Their design is to dishonour God, and to do God as much despight as they can: God smiteth them with blindness, and instead of accomplishing of their ungodly designs, he getteth glory upon them: *He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so as their hands cannot find their enterprize*, Job 5. 12.

Use 3. Let me caution all, *that they take heed, that they do not abuse*

abuſe this notion, to give themſelves a liberty to ſin. Do not think this a ſufficient warrant for you to do any ſinful action, becauſe God knoweth how to make your ſins ſerviceable to his glory. This was an old corrupt concluſion, which the Apoſtle foreſaw, men would falſely draw from theſe premiſes, *Rom.* 3. 7. *If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lye unto his glory, why then am I judged as a ſinner? and not rather, as we are ſlanderouſly reported, and as ſome affirm that we ſay, Let us do evil, that good may come upon it.* So when the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 5. had ſaid, *That as ſin had abounded, ſo grace ſhould much more abound*; ſome concluded, that it was then beſt to continue in ſin, that grace might abound. Whom the Apoſtle anſwereth, as you will find, *Rom.* 6. 1, 2, &c. But that none may think, that from hence he is licenſed or incouraged to ſin, I beſeech you to conſider,

1. *That God doth not move, or incite any to any ſinful action, nor command, nor approve any ſuch thing.* God in fetching of his own glory out of mens ſins, doth but (if I may ſo ſpeak with reverence unto God) make the beſt of our bad markets. In the Epiſtle of *John* to *Gaius*, ver. 11, ſaith he, *Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good: he that doth good, is of God; but he that doth evil, hath not ſeen God*, 1 Joh. 3. 8. *He that committeth ſin, is of the devil: now for this purpoſe was the Son of God manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the devil.* Sin is called the *work of the fleſh*; *the fleſh*, that is the mother of ſin, and *the Devil*, he is the *father of ſin*; the Devil ingendreth ſin upon our fleſh. So much of ſin as is in any man, ſo much there is in him of the fleſh, ſo much of the Devil; ſo much he is a ſervant to Satan, and to the fleſh.

2. Conſider, it is no *thanks to the ſinner, that God hath any glory from his ſin*; he is not active in the glorifying of God, his activity is all ſpent in the diſhonour of God: he is not *voluntary* in it. Sin doth not of its own nature glorifie God, there is nothing ſo contrary to the glory of God as our ſin is. The ſinner doth not, cannot intend the glory of God by his ſinful act. The ſinner in this caſe, is only a paſſive inſtrument of Gods glory; God fetcheth out his glory, forceth his glory from mens ſins. God is not at all beholden to the ſinner for any glory he getteth from his ſinful act. The glory which God hath from mens ſins, is as to the ſinner, meerly by accident, and beſides his intention; as much as it was beſides his intention, to let out an impoſthume, and cure his Enemy, who

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ran his ſword into him, with an intention to let out his life-blood.

3. Conſider, that *God needeth not our lye for his glory.* Every ſin is a lye, and God out of our lies fetcheth out his glory; but he needeth them not, and therefore it is madneſs to ſay, I will ſin that God may be glorified. God can better bring forth his glory another way, he would be much more glorified by thy keeping his Commandments, and doing of his Will. God indeed needeth not our duties and beſt actions; but he much leſs needeth our luſts and corruptions.

4. Conſider, *That though God in the wiſdom of his Providence, makes uſe of mens ſins, to fetch out his glory from them, yet he uſually takes vengeance upon the ſinner.* It is the practice of the *Politicians* of the world, to make uſe of the treaſons of others, but ſeldom to reward the Traytors. It cannot be ſaid of God, that he ever loves or approves of the treaſon of ſin, but he ever puniſheth the Traytor without a true repentance.

5. Laſtly, *When God makes uſe of the ſins of people for his own glory, and for their good and ſalvation alſo* (as in the caſe of thoſe which belong to his Election of grace), it is never done without a great deal of grief and ſorrow of heart to the ſinner: they are ſaved as through fire: great ſinnings muſt have great humiliation. He indeed ſometimes maketh uſe of his peoples ſins, to make them more humble, more watchful: but the ſinner firſt ſuffereth a great deal of loſs in the peace of his Spirit; he goes to heaven ordinarily with broken bones, and a bleeding heart. So that you ſee that Gods getting himſelf glory from his peoples ſin, gives no man a ground of preſumption, to go on in a courſe of ſin againſt God.

Uſe 4. In the laſt place, Let this obſervation mind us, in this caſe to be *workers together with God.* Have we ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God? *Let us do our indeavour to make our ſins to turn to the furtherance of the glory of God.* Let us indeavour to make the *beſt of our own bad markets.* What is done, we cannot re-call; let us indeavour, if poſſible, to make an advantage of our former miſcarriages. You will ſay, How ſhould that be?

Anſw. 1. *Let the ſenſe of your ſins haſten your pace to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* God hath a great deal of glory from our believing in him whom he hath ſent. The ſoul that accepteth of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt as his Saviour, giveth unto God the glory of his Power, Wiſdom, Juſtice, Goodneſs, Truth; it gives him the glory of the exceeding riches of his free-grace. 2. Make

2. Make uſe of your ſins to increaſe your *Confeſſion*, your *Repentance* and *Humiliation*. Confeſſion giveth glory to God: my Son, ſaith *Joſhua*, *Confeſs, and give glory to God.* Let your former ſins give you the further advantage for ſorrowing after a godly ſort, that will bring forth *carefulneſs, indignation, fear, vehement deſires, zeal, revenge*, as it did in the Church of *Corinth*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 11.

3. Let the remembrance of them *cauſe you to walk ſoftly all the days of your life*. This is that which God requireth of all, *to walk humbly with their God*. The remembrance of your ſins may be of notable uſe to you for this, to keep down that pride which is naturally in all our hearts; that ſwelling in an opinion of our ſelves, of our own duties and performances; that uncharitable judging, and cenſuring, and triumphing over others, when we ſee them fallen in the day of temptations.

4. Laſtly, Let the conſideration of how many ſins God hath forgiven you, make you *love much*. Thus the woman, *Luk.* 7. 37, 47. made an improvement, even of her former ſins; her *much* that was forgiven, ingaged her to love that God much, who had forgiven her ſo much. This improvement St. *Paul* made, 1 *Cor.* 15. 9, 10. *I am* (ſaith he) *the leaſt of all the Apoſtles, and not meet to be called an Apoſtle, becauſe I perſecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God, I am that I am, and his grace which was beſtowed on me, was not in vain: but I laboured more abundantly than they all.* O this will be an excellent improvement, even of your ſins, if your former unholineſs ſhall now help to make you more holy, your former unrighteouſneſs ſnall help to make you more righteous for the time to come; your reflexions upon how much you have done againſt God, and his Saints, ſhall now engage you to do more for God, and the cauſe and people of God. A good husband and houſe-wife, will loſe nothing, but make ſome advantage of every rag, every bit of wood, *&c.* I would have you be like them, you have been formerly great ſinners, and done much to the diſhonour of God: your conſciences can ſhew you a great dunghil of ſin, which you made in your ſtate of vanity: God hath changed your ſtate, changed your hearts: let not that dunghil be loſt, look upon it often, to help to raiſe up your hearts in the praiſes and admiration of Gods free-grace, and the engaging your hearts more for God in your contrary duties for the time to come. But ſo much ſhall ſerve for this Obſervation alſo.

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SERMON XXVI.

Psalm CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I Am still going on, instructing you to that spiritual Wisdom, which the Text telleth you may be gained by, and is declared in the Observation of the motions of *Actual Providence*. I am now proceeding to a Twelfth Observation of this nature, which I shall give you thus:

Observ. 12. *The Providence of God in the distribution of the good things of this life, doth in a great measure move circularly, though mostly to the seeming advantage of ungodly men.* In my enlargments upon this notion, I shall keep much to the same method which I observed in the former. 1. *Opening it unto you.* 2. *Justifying the observation by instances.* 3. *Shewing you the reasonableness of this motion of Divine Providence.* And lastly, *Making some suitable Application.*

1. My observation (as you see) concerneth the motions of Actual Providence, as to its distribution of the portions of this life. The *Pagan* Philosophers distributed all the good things they had any knowledg of into three sorts. *The good things of the body*, amongst which they reckoned, *long-life, health, strength, beauty*, &c. *The good things of the mind* the rich endowments of it, such as *knowledg, invention, judgment, wit, memory*, and *moral vertue*, &c. and the good things of *fortune*, such as *birth, ingenuous education, honours, riches.* All these have a goodness in them, which lyeth in their suitableness to the use of humane life or society. The blind Heathen, not seeing the fountain-head of these beautiful streams, ascribed them to fortune: But they are all in the hand of Providence, that giveth to one a longer, to another a shorter life; to one greater, to another lesser measures of health and

and ſtrength, *&c.* to one more judgment, wit, *&c.* than to another. But I chiefly underſtand my Obſervation of the good things, which the Heathen called, *Bona fortunæ*, the good things of fortune, ſuch as *honours*, *riches*, &c. Theſe alſo are the Lords; he it is, ſaith *Moſes*, *That gives us power to get wealth.* And the Holy Ghoſt by another pen-man telleth us, *That promotion cometh neither from the eaſt, nor from the weſt: but God pulleth down one, and ſetteth up another.* Promotion doth moſtly depend upon the favour of the great men of the Earth, and you ſhall obſerve the Scripture everywhere maketh God the Author of the favour and grace, which perſons have found in the eyes of the Princes of the world.

2. Now I obſerve in the firſt place, *That the wheel of Providence, in making this diſtribution, doth for the moſt part move circularly.* My meaning is, that good and evil of this nature, hath (as all humane things) its turns and viciſſitudes, ſometimes to good men, ſometimes to bad men. The Heathen had ſome proſpect of this, though what we call Providence, they aſcribed to *fortune*, to whom they gave a wheel, to ſignifie the rotation of all theſe ſublunary contentments, in which you know the ſame ſpokes are not always up nor down; but ſometimes theſe ſpokes are uppermoſt, by and by they are at the ground; and thoſe that but now were below, are up in their place. And this is moſt perſpicuous in bodies of people, which are made up of thoſe two ſorts of men, that divide the world, *godly* and *ungodly*. There is a time when the *vileſt* are exalted, and *the wicked walk on every ſide.* This is *their hour, and the power of darkneſs*, as our Saviour ſaith, *Luk.* 22. 53. And there is a time again, *When ten men ſhall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even ſhall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, ſaying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, Zech. 8. 23. There was a time when the ſeed of *Jacob* proſpered in *Egypt*, *Joſeph* was advanced, and he was a protection to them. A while after the wheel turns, *and there aroſe a King that knew not Joſeph*, and then the *Iſraeliti*ſh ſpoke in the wheel of Providence, was at the ground: but in a little while up it gets again. The Children of *Iſrael* go out of *Egypt* with colours flying, and drums beating, and *Pharaoh* and his Hoſt were drowned in the red Sea. This was now *their hour.* But ſoon after the wheels turn again, and they are almoſt devoured in the wilderneſs: But as ſoon as they were on the other

ſide of *Jordan*, they were again in a proſperous ſtate. Soon after they were oppreſſed, firſt by one *Pagan* Adverſary, and then by another; but in *Davids* and *Solomons* time, it was again an halcion-time with them. And when they were in *Canaan*, that party of them, after *Solomons* time, which adhered to God, had their viciſſitudes; as they had good or bad Princes, ſo it fared with them. In the ſeventy years of the *Babiloniſh* Captivity, they had a very ſad time; but when that was out, they had again a kind hour: and in the very time of the *Babiloniſh* Captivity, they doubtleſs had great viciſſitudes; and the caſe was much different with them, when the three Children were thrown into the fiery fornace, from what it was, when they were advanced to great honours: or when *Daniel* was thrown into the den of Lyons, from what it was, when he was made the firſt preſident. When they were come again into their own land, it was not above fifty years before *Ahaſueroſh* diſturbeth their ſettlement, *Ezra* 4. 6. After a few years more, they perfect the building, both of the Temple and City. Soon after they were oppreſſed, firſt by the *Grecians*, (when it was a very ſad time with them) then by the *Romans*, under whom they enjoyed more liberty, till after the crucifying of Chriſt, ſoon after which, God ſaid to them, *Lo ammi, you are not my people.* The like obſervation might be made of the Chriſtian Church-Catholick, and the ſeveral parts of it; *God will not always chide, nor keep his anger for ever*, Pſal. 103. 9. *The needy ſhall not always be forgotten*, Pſal. 9. 18. he hath ſaid, *He will not contend for ever, neither will he be always wroth.* The ſame obſervation might be made of *particular perſons* and *parties fearing God. Jacob* had his time of hard ſervice, and his time of liberty. *Joſeph* one while is a priſoner, another time the ſecond man in the Kingdom. *David* had a time, when he was *hunted like a partridg on the mountains*, and his time when he ruled happily and peaceably over all *Iſrael* and *Judah*.

2. The ſecond part of my Obſervation was, that as to theſe good things, the Actual Proridence of God, *ordinarily moveth to the ſeeming advantage of wicked men:* I ſay, *ſeeming advantage* upon a double account: 1. For firſt, *Wicked men have no real advantage from any good things they have*, their morſels are all dipt in wrath; and they turn to their real loſs and diſadvantage, as they draw out their luſts, and aggravate their eternal condemnation. 2. *I much queſtion whether they have that ſeeming advantage,*

tage, which they appear to have. If we consider the disproportion in the numbers of such as fear the Lord, and such as fear him not; I believe we shall find God, as to the things of this life, do as much for his people, as for wicked men. It is true, we see more wicked men than good men in places of honour and power; we see more of them, than of these prosper in the world, and grow great and rich: but therefore what disproportion is there betwixt the number of the one, and of the other? But however, certain it is, that the servants of God have many of them found this a rock of offence to them, and have stumbled upon this temptation; so did *Job*, chap. 21. *David*, Psal. 73. *Jeremiah*, Jer. 12. 1. *Habbakuk*, &c. And this appearance hath been a temptation to others, to deny, or at least to dispute the Providence of God. I shall therefore give you a more particular account of this, when I come to open the Δυσνόητα, or *hard Chapters of Divine Providence.* In the mean time, I take notice of it, only as matter for our *observation*, and supposing that it is so, I shall hereafter shew you, that it is but a reasonable motion of Providence. But truly upon a stricter observation, I believe we shall find Divine Providence, as to these things, more circular in its motions, and equal in its distributions, than we usually judg it; being deceived, by not wistly observing the disproportion of each party in its numbers; and that of *Solomon*, Eccles. 9. 1, 2. will hold, *that the love or hatred of God, is not to be judged from what doth in this life happen unto men.*

3. But thirdly, (which I should have added to the observation, and crave your leave yet to add it) in the dispensations of *special grace*, and those good things which are truly spiritual, *the Providence of God is inaccountable:* here the way of Providence, is like the way of an Eagle in the air, a Ship upon the Sea, or a serpent upon a rock, it cannot be tracked. It is true, our Saviour saith, πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται, *the poor receive the Gospel*; so I should rather translate it, as in the passive voice, then as our translation doth, as if it were the middle voice. *The poor preach the Gospel*; and the Apostle telleth us, *That God hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in grace, and heirs of the kingdom.* And again, you know your calling brethren, *not many rich, not many wise, not many noble*, &c. yet the Providence of God doth deal out *special grace* to the rich, as well as to the poor. *Abraham*, and *Lot*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and *Job*, and *David*, and *Solomon*,

Joseph, and *Daniel*, and *Joseph* of *Arimathea*, were all rich men; though as the number of the poor, far exceedeth the number of them who are possessors of great Estates; so the number of holy persons of mean estates, bears the like disproportion to the number of such persons, that are great, and abound in this worlds goods; neither doth the Providence of God deal out these riches of special grace, as if they were inheritances. Was not *Jacob* and *Esau* brethren? *yet the Lord loved Jacob, and hated Esau.* You often in Scripture read of good men, that had very bad children; and of bad men, that had very good children: *Jeroboam* was a wicked man, one that made *Israel* to sin, yet in *Abijam* his son, there was *some good thing found towards the Lord. Abijam* the *King of Judah*, was a man that walked in all the sins of his Fathers, 1 *King.* 15. 2. Yet *ver.* 11. *Asa* his son *did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Jehoshaphat*, the son of *Asa*, was a very good man; but *Jehoram* his son *walked in all the ways of the Kings of Israel*, 2 Chron. 21. 5. so did *Ahaziah* his son. *Jonathan* was a good man, 2 *Chron.* 27; but *Ahaz* his son *walked in the ways of the Kings of Israel, and made images for Baalim*; yet the son of *Ahaz*, *Hezekiah*, was an excellent man. *Manasses* his son was a very wicked man the greatest part of his life: indeed, 2 *Chron.* 33. 13, 14, 15, being carried into *Babylon*, and *bound in fetters*, he besought the Lord, and the Lord was intreated of him; and then the Scripture telleth us, *That he knew the Lord was God*, and he began something of reformation, *ver.* 15. *Ammon* his son was a very wicked Prince, but *Josiah* his son an excellent man; but we read no good of any one of his sons. Thus as to the dispensations of saving-grace, we see the Providence of God is not to be tracked, sometimes given to the son of a good father; at another time denied to the seed of those in Covenant with God, and given out to the children of most vile and wicked parents: and this is no more than we yet see every day in the dealings of God. But it is time that I should shew you the reasonableness of these motions of Divine Providence. 1. *Why the Providence of God moveth in such a circular motion, in the distribution of the good things of this life.* It will appear reasonable to you,

1. If you consider both *Gods general relation to all his creatures, and also his special kindness, and the demonstration of it to his people, together with his faithfulness to his promises.* 1. I say, *his general relation to all his creatures:* they are his creatures, he their Crea-

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tor; they by Creation his children, and he their father. It is true, they are undutiful children, and do not answer the law of their Creation; God may say to them, *If I be your father, where is my honour?* But yet children they are, God intends them not the inheritance, and therefore God doth by them, as *Abraham* by the children he had by *Keturah*, Gen. 25. 5. *To whom he gave portions, and sent them away.* A father hath many children, some elder, some younger, some more dutiful, whom he loveth with a more peculiar love; but he hath something of a fatherly affection for them all, he giveth them all portions, more or less. Some have their *portion in this life*, as *David* speaketh, *Psal.* 17. *Son remember*, saith *Abraham* to *Dives*, *thou hadst thy good things in this life: thy good things.* So *Lazarus* had a right to a childs portion. *Joseph* sent all his brethren a mess, though to *Benjamin* he sent seventimes as much as to the rest. 2. But besides this, some wicked men have another relation to God, as *servants in some special service*, none of them are universally Gods servants; but in *some special service*, many wicked men are Gods servants. And no man shall serve God for nothing. This was *Jehu's* case, which procured him the Crown for four generations, for the service he did God against the house of *Ahab*. Then if we consider, 1. *Gods special kindness to his people*, declared so often in Scripture, and the reasonableness that God should make some demonstration of it, that all the world may know that God will honour those that honour him; and how impossible it is, that the men of the world should take notice of this, and be convinced of it meerly from spiritual rewards, of which they have no certain cognisance, or from eternal rewards; you will see it but reasonable, that God in his Providence should dispose, even of the goods of this life, unto his own people, though not to all, yet to many of them, and that they should have their turns in these distributions of Providence, and not be always, or all of them poor and needy, or vile, and contemptible in the eyes of the world. Especially seeing that, as the Apostle saith, *Godliness hath the promise as well of this life, as of that which is to come:* And our Lord hath commanded us to *seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof*, upon the encouragement of a gracious promise, that the things of this life *shall be added to them.* Further, if there should be no circulation of Providence in these distributions, how should those Scriptures be fulfilled? wherein God hath told

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us, *Pſal.* 30. 5. *That the rod of the wicked ſhall not always reſt upon the lot of the righteous; that he will take care that the ſpirits ſhould not fail before him, nor the ſouls that he hath made: that his anger endureth but for a moment; that ſorrow comes for a night, but joy ſhall come in the morning*, &c. And thoſe many other promiſes for the good things of this life, which are made to the People of God in Scripture, though they are not to be interpreted into an extent of that latitude, as if they ſhould be the conſtant portion of the Church and People of God, or of every child of God. Yet how ſhould they be made good, if there were not ſome circulation of Providence in the diſtribution of the good things of this life; if it ſhould not go ſometimes well, as well as ſometimes ill with the Church and People of God.

2. The reaſonableneſs of this motion of Divine Providence will appear to you, from *Gods love and zeal to Juſtice.* Juſtice lyes in giving to every one their due; God muſt be juſt, and his Juſtice muſt be declared to the world, that all may know, that the God of Heaven is a righteous God. Now this Juſtice of God requireth ſuch a circulation of Providence, as I have commended to your obſervation. If you will but conſider, that as the whole life of wicked men is a life of rebellion and diſobedience: So God never had a Church in the world, nor any particular Saint, but had their corruptions, and were guilty of many miſcarriages, which ſubjected them to the vindicative Juſtice of God. Now for the People of God (if I may ſo ſpeak with holy Reverence) God hath tyed up his own hands, he cannot puniſh them with eternal puniſhments, he hath accepted a price, a ſatisfaction for them; ſo as now, *There is no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus: But he hath a controverſie, even with Judah; and he muſt puniſh Jacob according to his ways, and according to his doings he muſt recompence him*, Hoſ. 12. 3. This can be no otherwiſe, than by denying of them ſome good things in this life, either ſuch ſpiritual enjoyments, as the denial of is yet conſiſtent with their enjoyment of the eternal inheritance, or thoſe things which concern the outward man. And as to wicked men, although their greater puniſhment is reſerved unto another life; yet it is neceſſary for the vindication of *Divine Juſtice before the world*, that they ſhould in this life alſo have their portion of affliction and miſery: for as to *ſpiritual judgments*, they are but ſecret plagues, which the world taketh no notice of, nor doth it

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understand the bitterness and terribleness of them: and as to eternal punishments, they, as well as the *eternal rewards of the righteous*, are matters of faith, and as not evidenced to the sense of the living part of the world; so neither to be made so demonstrable to their reason, as to inable the men of the world, from them alone, to conclude the Justice of God in recompencing sinners according to their ways. So that upon this supposition, that the God of Heaven is a righteous God, that will recompence every one according to his ways, and that in the eyes of the world he will declare his Righteousness: There must be in this life, both a reward, and a punishment for the People of God, and a recompence for the wicked according to their ways; and consequently such a rotation and circulation of Actual Providence, in the distribution of the good things of this life, as I have been discoursing to you. And this now gives you a reasonable account of this motion.

If you further require of me to give you a reasonable account, *of the seeming inequality of the hand of Divine Providence, in these distributions*, why it seemeth to give most advantage to evil men.

1. In the first place it is sufficient to repeat to you, what I before told you, that it is but a seeming advantage. The good things of this life are not in themselves good or evil, but as they are used and improved. Indeed they are such as of themselves have a tendency to make men better; but they make men better or worse, according to the hearts they meet with. Many a mans honours and riches prove his ruin here; but they prove to many more (through the corruption of their hearts) the occasion of the eternal ruin of their souls, as they give them more opportunities to exercise the lusts and corruptions of their hearts. As they are sensible portions, so it is but reasonable, that the worst of men should have their portions of them; and through the predominancy of lust and corruption in their hearts, they prove no advantages to them; but such things as fat them up to the day of slaughter, and further prepare them for the Revelation of the righteous Judgments of God against them.

2. But, secondly, for *riches* and *honours*. The Providence of God doth ordinarily dispense them out to men, *according to their indeavours, and oft-times rather suffers men to get them, then gives them to them.* Gods efficiency is indeed sometimes dis-

discernable in giving men *estates* and *honours*, giving them favour in the sight of Princes, raising them up great friends: but the most of men that come to great *wealth* and *honours*, arrive at them, by being only suffered by God to walk and prosper in their own ways. And indeed this is one reason, why the way to these great things in the world, is more open to the Sinners, than to the Saints of the Earth. Our Saviour calleth riches, *the Mammon of unrighteousness*; and although it possibly was too large to say, *omnis Dives*; yet it had been true enough to have said, *Plerunq; Dives est vel iniquus vel iniqui hæres*, great estates are at first gotten (usually) by ill means, and are attainments, hardly fit for those who think themselves tyed up to the rule of the Gospel; being either got by undue sparing, or unjust dealing. And the same might be said of honours. Indeed it is not always so, sometimes God throw's an estate into a mans lap, that is careless of it, and heapeth honours upon some that seek not after it: and this may be one reason, why in these distributions the Providence of God in the distribution of these things, moveth more to the appearing advantage of wicked men, who can use any arts and means to make themselves rich and great; than of those who live by a stricter rule, and must refuse gold offered them upon sinful terms, and honours tendred them as a price for a prostituted conscience.

3. Experience teacheth us, *That affliction and poverty, and a mean condition in the world, and a scant measure of the good things thereof, are most adequate to the exercises of grace, and the enjoyment of communion with God. Israel* followeth God in the wilderness, in the land of droughts, and apostatizeth in the land of *Canaan*. When *Jeshurun waxeth fat, she kicketh up the heel*, like a fatted beast in the pasture, that while it was lean, was tame enough: and therefore *Agur* prays as much against excessive riches, as poverty. Now Gods whole design upon the Saints, is by his dispensations to them in this life, to fit them for the inheritance of the Saints in light; and what he gives them, shall be no more, than will accompany salvation, and fit them for it.

As to the third thing in my observation, who can give an account of the thing that is inaccountable? The reason of it lies in this: *That God will have mercy, upon whom he will have mercy: and whom he will, he hardeneth.* God will proclaim to the world, that his *Grace* is *Grace*, that is, free, not to be conveyed as an in-

heritance from the father to the child: not depending upon the merits of parents, nor annexed to any ſecular circumſtances, nor any thing, which in this world maketh one man to differ from another. But this is enough to give you ſome rational account of theſe motions of Divine Providence. I come now to the practical Application of what you have heard.

Uſe 1. And in the firſt place this Obſervation will confirm us, *That the love of God to mens immortal ſouls, is not to be determined from his diſpenſations of the good things of this life.* In Gods ſpecial love, there is a certainty, in theſe things there is a great incertainty. Theſe the Providence of God diſpoſeth in ſome kind of Circulation; ſometimes godly men have them, ſometimes wicked men, ſometimes the Church of God, ſometimes the Enemies of God. The Providence of God (as you have heard) in theſe things moveth moſt to the advantage of the vileſt men. But leaving this more general branch of Application, I ſhall apply it more particularly.

1 *To the ſinners of the world that proſper.* The rod of God is not upon their backs, they are not plagued like other men: Gods Sun ſhineth upon their Tabernacles: their Bull gendreth, and faileth not; their Cows calve, and caſt not their calves; they ſend forth their little ones like a flock, they take their Harps, and rejoyce at the ſound of the Organ (as *Job* ſpeaketh) *riches*, and *power*, and *honour*, are all with them. Three things I would take the advantage of this Obſervation to caution them againſt.

1. *That they would not promiſe themſelves a perpetuity in this ſtate.* As the child of God may ſay of his adverſity and afflictions, theſe things are not *Eternity*; ſo the ſinner may ſay of his proſperity. There is a circulation in the motions of Providence in its diſtribution of theſe things: The ſame ſpokes of the wheel are not always uppermoſt; you are now ſpokes in the upper part, the wheel will turn, and you will be lower; moſt ſinners have their day, but it is but a day. Day and night, ſummer and winter, light and darkneſs follow one another in humane conditions, as well as in time: ſome have a ſummers-day, others a ſhorter winter-day, but none hath more than their hour or day. It was *Babilon's* error to ſay, *That ſhe ſate like a Lady, and ſhould*

never see widowhood, or loss of children. God tells her both these should come upon her in one day. It is the weakness of humane nature to look upon any thing here as permanent. Are you therefore in a state of prosperity? Is it your hour? think not you shall never be moved. *David, Psal.* 30. said in the day when his mountain stood strong, *That he should never be moved.* God did but *hide his face, and he was troubled.* You may possibly meet with particular persons, that are exceptions to this general rule, but hardly any body of people.

2. Let what you have heard *admonish you not to glory and triumph in your prosperous state*; if you will rejoyce, let it be with *trembling.* The observation affords two reasons why the *prosperous sinner* should not excessively rejoyce. 1. *Because there is a circulation in these motions of Providence.* This was that which quieted *Davids* spirit, disturbed at the prosperous state of ungodly men, *Psal.* 73. 18. *Surely thou hast set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into destruction.* 2 I have told you that the *Providence of God in these dispensations seemeth to incline most to favour the worst of men. David,* Psal. 17. 13, 14. prayeth to be delivered from *wicked men, who have their portion in this life, and whose belly God filled with his hidden treasure.* It hath been an ordinary thing for good men to suspect the love of God to them, when they have met with no changes. *Luther* was afraid God intended to put him off with the good things of this life. *But,* saith he, *I protested that I would not be so satisfied.*

3. Lastly, This speaketh aloud to sinners on the *pinacles of the world, not to harden their hearts.* Sin gives a man a base spirit, you shall ordinarily observe, that the worst of men are most proud and haughty in their prosperity, and the most cowardly and low in their spirits, when an hour of adversity comes. How ordinarily do we see it? If vile and abject men get a little power on their side, there is no living by them, their insolencies, oppressions and cruelties are so intolerable; but let them be a little under hatches, there's none will crouch so basely. *But, O you fools, when will you be wise?* O that in their days of health, they would but think they may be sick, when they are rich, that they may be poor; that when they are the head, they would consider they may be the tail. Prosperity then would not harden them: but it is true, which the Holy Ghost tells us, *That*

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prosperity slayeth the fool. It seldom doth a child of God good. *Before I was afflicted* (saith holy *David*) *I went astray*; but it ordinarily *slayeth the fool.* I shall advantage this with this further observation. As it is usually observed, that men who have had a long and non-interrupted health, seldom escape the first acute sickness they meet with. So it is very rare, that God entereth into judgment with a sinner, that hath enjoyed a long prosperity, but he utterly consumeth him; you cannot but observe in reading the Prophets, that as they denounced the Judgments of God against his own People; so they also denounced them against the Enemies of God, and with this remarkable difference. They seldom threaten judgment to them, but it was *utter ruin*; God would make a full *end of them.* But saith God, as to his own people, *Thou shalt not go utterly unpunished.* I will make a full end of the Nations, that have carried thee away captive, *but I will not make a full end of thee*, Jer. 30. 11, &c.

But secondly, Let me turn my self to them that *fear the Lord*, and improve my observation as to them in three or four words.

1. *Fret not then at the prosperous state of wicked men.* It is the great argument of the 37 *Psalm:* where it is pressed from a great variety of arguments. Remember that the motions of Providence are circular. There are two sorts of things that use mightily to affect us. 1. *Strange and unusual things.* 2 *Things which appear to us against reason.* It is no strange thing, *Job* 12. 6. *Job* complained *that the tabernacles of robbers prospered, and they that provoked God were secure, the men into whose hands God bringeth abundantly.* Disturb not your selves then if you see men of prodigious wickedness great in power, and honour, and riches, and flourishing ('tis but what hath always been) and trampling under foot the people of the Lord. It is no new thing that happeneth to you. A second sort of things we usually startle at, are those things which seem to us *unreasonable*; we cannot reconcile them to our thoughts, and such a thing is this prosperity of sinners: but this fancy speaketh only, 1. *The weakness of our faith.* 2. *And the shallowness of our reason.* If we had faith but as a grain of mustard-seed, that we could believe a life to come, and the joys of an eternal state, in which these

men ſhall have no portion; we ſhould not think theſe things of that value, but that God might reaſonably give them to wicked men. We are like ordinary people, that never were out of the Town where they live, or the Nation wherein they were born, that take that Town, or that Nation to be *all the world*, and think there is no place better than that which they ſee and live in. Did we believe that there is a more enduring ſubſtance? an houſe in the Heavens not made with hands, an inheritance that is immortal, incorruptible, that fadeth not away, to none of which the ungodly man hath any right at all, we ſhould never trouble our ſelves, that the Sun ſhineth a little upon the Tabernacles of ungodly men: we ſhould think it but reaſonable, that God ſhould allow ſomething of the good things of this life to vile and profligate livers. Remember how the Father of the prodigal quieted the Son that had been always with him, troubled that his brother, who had devoured his living with Harlots, had the fatted calf killed for him, *Luke* 15. 31. *Son, remember thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.* The People of God, have God always with them, and are admitted to a daily communion with God; all the *grace*, all the *glory of God* is theirs. Think this reward enough for the cleanſing of thy heart, and the waſhing of thy hands; and ſeeing the ſwearers and blaſphemers, and even the worſt men of the world, are Gods Creatures, and ſome of them (though they mean not ſo), yet do God ſervice ſometimes; do not judg it unreaſonable that God ſhould give them a portion in this life. But I forbear knowing, that it will fall in my way hereafter, when I ſhall come to open the hard Chapters of Divine Providence, to ſpeak more fully to the reaſonableneſs of this motion of Divine Providence.

2. This calleth unto the *People of God, if at any time they be in a proſperous ſtate to look for an hour of adverſity.* The Circulations of Divine Providence admoniſh Gods People of this; no man reaſonably ſaith in the morning, that the Sun ſhall ſet no more in his Horizon, nor in the Summer, that he ſhall never feel the cold, or ſee the ſtorms of another Winter; he conſiders the *Ordinances of nature*, and the Circulation of theſe natural motions. It is as unreaſonable to promiſe our ſelves ſtated and uninterrupted felicity in this life, to ſay (as *David*) *In our*

prosperity I shall never be moved. Be rather thinking what you shall do, if God should bring you into such a condition.

3. Nor do you *despond in adversity.* Say to the Enemies of Church and Gospel, as the Church in *Micah*, *Mic.* 7.8. *Rejoyce not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.* It is as unreasonable for any to conclude at midnight, that there shall never be a morning, as in the morning to fancy there shall never be a midnight more: you have not it may be in this life those full measures of the good things thereof, which others have; *But*, saith *David*, *Psal.* 17. *when I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness.* Some interpret it of an awaking at the *resurrection*, that is sure enough. Some of an awaking out of his afflicted state; God in this life is not always smiting, not always grieving the children of men *The rod of the wicked shall not always lye upon the back of the righteous.* Do not build too much upon these hopes, remember that God hath better things for his people, than *riches* and *honours*, and *earthly power.* Heaven is their portion, but yet even as to this life, do not cast away your hope.

4. But lastly, *Be patient under all the frowns of Divine Providence.* This is the method of Providence, the sinner must have his hour, and that hour to the People of God will be the very *power of darkness.* The beasts that are neareſt the slaughter, usually have the fatteſt pastures; God hath far better things reserved for them that love him, and even in this life: *He will not leave you comfortless, he will come unto you*; if not to the rescue of your bodies, yet to the relief, support, and satisfaction of your souls. *Wherefore comfort your selves with these words.*

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SERMON XXVII.

Pſal. CVII. 43.

Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things: even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

WE take notice in the world, that Wiſdom is not ſo much the daughter of *ſtudy*, as of *experience*. It is a practical habit, directing the ordering of mens converſations to their beſt advantage: which is not ſo well acquired from our poring on books, and making concluſions from *connate principles*, or *maxims* of others, as from the *obſervation* of what we ſee in the world. Hence we obſerve what *Job* ſaid, *Job* 12. 12. *with the Auncients is wiſdom. Elihu* ſaid, *Job* 32. 7. *Days ſhall ſpeak, and multitude of years ſhall teach wiſdom.* There muſt indeed be ſuppoſed a foundation in *nature*, and that is a good *faculty of judgment*, and a *foundation* in art; for *wiſdom* dwelleth with *knowledg*, but neither *nature*, nor *art* and *ſtudy* will make a morally *wiſe man*. Obſervation contributes more than either: and this is the reaſon that wiſdom is with the *Auncients*, and that *multitude of years teacheth it*. The reaſon of this is, the inequal diſtribution of *reaſon* to reaſonable creatures, and the prevalence of *paſſion* above it in the moſt of men; from this it is, that we can better conclude what is like to be done in the world, from what hath been done, than from any rational principles, which will tell us what one would think reaſonable men ſhould do. Spiritual Wiſdom likewiſe is much gained by *obſervation*: this is that which we call *experience*, by which we underſtand not always what our ſelves have felt, but what we have ſeen with our eyes, what we have remarked in Gods dealings. And the reaſon of this, is *our imperfect underſtanding of what God hath revealed in his word*, which lets us ſee, that we ſtand in need both of the *Spirit*, and of the *Providence* of God to be our interpreters;

ters; and the *oneneſs and immutability of God* gives us a far better advantage to gain wiſdom from the iſſues of his Providence, then the variable paſſions of men will allow us to gain from what we ſee in their actings, whoſe methods oft-times vaſtly differ one from another; ſo as the policies of one age, have no cognation with thoſe of another. The reaſon alſo of which is, becauſe there is a *wheel within theſe wheels* (though the fools and blind men of the world ſee it not) governing theſe ſenſible wheels, to the deſigns of his eternal counſels. Hence it is, that he *who is wiſe, will obſerve*; and he who *would be wiſe*, muſt obſerve the *motions of Divine Providence*; which though it hath many ſecret and unſearchable motions, yet alſo hath many certain and uniform motions, which will fall under the ſcience and underſtanding of the ſoul, that giveth up it ſelf to the ſtudy and obſervation of them. I have already offered to you twelve Obſervations upon the motions of Providence, I yet proceed, and ſhall at preſent offer you ſome further things chiefly relating to the motions of Divine Providence, in the executing of *Divine Juſtice* and *Judgment*, and that as well in the *rewarding* of the *righteous*, as in the puniſhment of the ſinner; Two great works of Divine Providence, about which indeed it is moſtly taken up: it goeth to and fro the world, doing this work every day; let us ſee how far we can track it, or make any judgment from the prints of its feet, where, or what we are like to meet with from it: meet it we muſt at every turn of our lives; our buſineſs is to make up a judgment, what we are like to meet with from it, whether it be like to ſay unto us, *Haſt thou met me, O my friend!* or as *Ahab* to *Elijah*, *Haſt thou met me, O mine enemy!* The next Obſervation I ſhall commend to you, is this:

Obſerv. 13. *The reward of the righteous man, and alſo of the ſinner, is always certain and conſtant, though not always ſenſible and uniform?* This muſt be true. *Shall not the judg of all the earth do right?* Gen. 18. 25. It is in the nature of God to do juſtly, far ſooner ſhall a good tree bring forth corrupt fruit, than a righteous God do an unrighteous act. It is written in the Will and Promiſes of God, and in the threatnings which declare the Will of God againſt ſinners. *Say ye to the righteous, that it ſhall be well with them, for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings: Wo unto the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him, for the*

reward of his hands ſhall be given him, Iſa. 3.9, 10. *Though a ſinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged: yet ſurely it ſhall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him: But it ſhall not be well with the wicked, neither ſhall he prolong his days*, Eccleſ. 8. 12. But it may be better for your edification, that I ſhould open the Obſervation in the branches of it. The ſubject of my diſcourſe you ſee is the *vindicative* and *remunerative Juſtice* of God, conſidered as in the hand of Actual Providence, I ſay of both.

1. That *it is certain*, both the one and the other is certain; for the ſinner that ſwears and drinks, and wallows in his beaſtly luſts, that lies and cheats, and oppreſſeth, and breaks Sabbaths, that murthereth, and committeth adultery, and lives in the violation of the Commandments of God, his Judgment is certain, his damnation ſleepeth not; the Providence of God ſhall moſt certainly meet him, as a Bear robbed of her whelps, to tear him in pieces, and there ſhall be none to deliver. On the contrary, for him that *worketh righteouſneſs, that herein exerciſeth himſelf to keep a conſcience void of offence, both towards God, and towards men*, that liveth an holy life and converſation, *his reward is certain*. The certainty of both theſe depends, 1. *Upon the immutable nature of God*. The righteous God loveth righteouſneſs, and hateth iniquity, he cannot *clear the guilty*; he cannot but reward the righteous; as ſoon ſhall God ceaſe to be God, as the *perſiſting ſinner* go unpuniſhed, or the perſevering Saint be unrewarded. 2. It dependeth upon the *irrevocable will of God*. God hath ſaid it, the Lord hath ſpoken it, and it ſhall come to paſs. Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away, before a word ſnall fail of all which the mouth of the Lord has ſpoken. 3. It dependeth upon the *faithfulneſs of Divine Providence, in acting conformably to the Divine Nature, in the execution of the Divine Counſels, and in purſute of the Divine Will*. Providence is Gods action in time, God cannot act contrary to himſelf, nor contrary to his revealed Will. But this is what none without great impiety can ſo much as doubt. But I added,

2. *That both the puniſhment of the ſinner, and the reward of the righteous man is conſtant*. This is not now a matter of ſo ſenſible demonſtration, but equally true with the other, *Pſal.* 7. 11. The holy Pſalmiſt tells us, *He judgeth the righteous, and is angry with the wicked every day*. Anger in God ſignifieth nothing of paſſion

paſſion, as it doth in us. It only ſignifieth Gods *juſt will* to puniſh ſinners, and *the execution of this his juſt will and pleaſure.* Now I take that phraſe, *God is angry with the wicked every day*, to be true in both ſenſes; not only that God hath an immutable will, purpoſe, and reſolution to puniſh reſolved and impenitent ſinners, but alſo that he is every day doing of it: and ſo he is every day rewarding the righteous man. But this will better appear in my Explication of the third thing, where I told you,

3. *That neither the reward of the one, nor the puniſhment of the other are uniform, or always ſenſible.* And indeed the not-attending to this, is all that gives the leaſt advantage to the complaints of *Job*, *David*, *Jeremiah* and *Habakkuk*, concerning the proſperity of the wicked. *God ſometimes puniſheth ſinners by temporary afflictions and judgments:* theſe now are obvious to every eye, and incur into all mens ſenſes. All men take notice of mens being afflicted in their perſons, *croſſed in their relations*, in their *eſtates*, &c. But thus God doth not always puniſh the worſt of men.

2. He hath another *way of puniſhing*, and that more dreadful, that is, by *ſpiritual judgments*; *ubi pœnalis nutritur impunitas*, a puniſhing them by ſuffering them to go unpuniſhed. God never more ſmartly threatned the ten Tribes, than when he told them by the Prophet, *Hoſ.* 4. 14. *I will not puniſh your daughters, when they commit whoredom, nor your ſpouſe when they commit adultery.* He never ſpake more ſeverely, than when he ſaid, *Why ſhould they be ſmitten any more, they will revolt more and more*, Iſa. 1. 5. Hence impenitency, hardneſs of heart: hence they bleſs themſelves in their ſinful courſes: this makes them ſhut their eyes, and ſtop their ears. This is indeed an inſenſible judgment; but as it is with the wounds of the body, the more ſecret they are, and inward, the worſe they are: ſo it is with judgments upon a man, the more inward and inſenſible, the more deſperate and dangerous is the caſe. The giving of ſinners up to a *blindneſs of mind*, (as in the caſe of the *Iſraelites*), *Iſa.* 6. 9. to an *hardneſs of heart* (as in the caſe of *Pharaoh*), *Exod.* 4. 21. *to vile affections*, (as in the caſe of the *Heathen*), *Rom.* 1. 26. to a *reprobate mind*, &c. Theſe are of all other the greateſt puniſhment, one or other way God is angry with the wicked every day. Although he is not every day plaguing them with ſenſible judgments; yet

when he is not doing this, he is *letting them alone* (as God spake concerning *Ephraim*, *Ephraim* is joyned to *idols*, *let him alone*) suffering them to go on in their own ways, by which means their hearts grow more *hard* and *impenitent*, more *blind* and *insensible*: and this is the reason that *wicked men grow worse and worse*, more vile in their affections, more sottish and reprobate in their minds and judgments, more vile and abominable in their lives. And as the punishment of the sinner, so the reward of the righteous man, though it be always certain and constant, yet it is not *uniform*, nor always *sensible*, especially to others. The certainty of their reward standeth upon the very same foundations, that the certainty of the sinners punishment doth, and so doth the *constancy* of it: for as God is *angry with the wicked every day*, so God is well-pleased with the righteous every day; he can every day go to God, and say unto him, *Thou art my father*; God is every day well-pleased with him, and delighted in him. But I say, these *rewards* are not always uniform, our heavenly Father hath more than one blessing; sometimes he blesseth him that worketh righteousness after one manner, sometimes after another, but he always blesseth them. Let me a little open to you the plenty of blessings, which our heavenly Father hath, and shew you how variously he rewardeth him that worketh righteousness.

1. Sometimes *some of his people shall be blessed with outward blessings*. *Abraham* shall be a rich man, and have many flocks and herds. *Joseph* shall be the second man in *Egypt*. *David* and *Solomon* shall be great Princes. *Mordecay* shall be the man whom the King of *Persia* shall delight to honour. *Daniel* shall be the first president. This is necessary that God may justifie his Promises of this nature: you have such, *Psal.* 128. 1, 2, 3. and in many other Texts of holy Writ. They may be necessary to uphold the interest of God in the world. The world must sometimes say, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous*. Gods own people shall sometimes have healthy bodies, numerous families, plentiful comfort in their relations; many left hand-mercies, added to those *spiritual blessings*, with which God hath blessed them all in Jesus Christ.

2. Others now God doth not reward this way, *but he rewardeth them in their souls and inward man:* and indeed this is the constant reward of them that fear the Lord: and there is a variety in these too. God doth not measure out the same kinds,

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nor the same proportions unto all. Some are blessed with a quiet conscience, possibly they have not extasies of joy as others, but their hearts do not condemn them: and this is indeed the usual reward of the man that worketh righteousness: *The work of righteousness shall be peace* (saith the Prophet), *Isa.* 32 17. If God brings them to a sick-bed, or into any other strait, they can say with *Hezekiah*, 2 *King.* 20. 3. *I beseech thee, O Lord, remember me now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart*, that is, an upright sincere heart; or with *Nehemiah* 13, 14. *Remember me, O Lord, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds which I have done for the house of my God.* And give me leave to tell you, this is a great reward, but to be delivered from the sowre reflexions of a condemning conscience: for as there is nothing more nauseous and troublesom to us, than the sower recoilings of our stomack; so there is no greater torment to a mans life, than the recoilings of a guilty conscience. Nothing is oft-times so great a torture to a sinner as this, when he saith unto his conscience, *Is it peace?* and his conscience tells him, *What peace?* so long as thy drunkenness, thy whoredoms, thy lyes, and oaths and blasphemies, thy cheating and cozening, thy oppression and violence remain? *There is no peace to the wicked* (saith my God). On the other side there is nothing so refreshing unto a spirit tired with the crosness of the world, than to find a peace within himself. Now this is the general reward of the righteous man, if he misseth raptures and extasies of joy; yet he cometh not short ordinarily of a quiet and serenity of a waky and awakened conscience. I know there are hours of melancholy, and darkness, and desertion, to which the best of Gods People are exposed; but these are but rare examples in comparison of those multitudes of godly ones, that walk in some blessed view of their own sincerity and uprightness. Some he *rewardeth in their inward man, with raptures and extasies of God: They know and are perswaded that nothing shall separate them from the love of God in Jesus Christ*; they defie death and hell, and challenge the fatal strokes which others tremble at the thoughts of. They complain of time, and were it not for the Law of God in the case, would dismiss their souls of their prison, and lye (like men waiting for a wind) longing for that happy gale, that should carry their souls into the wide Sea of Eternity. But this is but the portion of a few, and scarce the abiding temper of

them neither; but such hours the People of God have had. Some again he rewardeth *inwardly* with *strength*, confirmed habits of grace, and contentment with their portion, *&c.* Their outward man decreaseth, but their inward man increaseth day by day: they are poor in purse, but rich in grace; they have but little, but they are content with what they have, and tell all the world they have enough. And let me tell you, that as punishments in the inward man, are the greatest punishments; so these spiritual rewards are of all other the greatest rewards, which is matter of easie demonstration, if we will but allow our souls to be our nobler parts, and the Jewel to be better than the *Cabinet*. Whatsoever tends to the debasing and ruining the soul, must be the greatest evil; and whatsoever conduceth to its ennobling or felicity, must be the greatest reward and good. Besides this, spiritual judgments are the continual forerunners of such as are temporal, and spiritual mercies draw after them, at least a proportion and sufficiency of the good things of this life. *All these things shall be added unto you* (saith our Saviour). 2 *Chron.* 25. 16. God sent a Prophet unto *Amaziah*, the King would not hear him; see what the Prophet saith, *I know* (saith the Prophet) *that God hath determined to destroy thee: why? because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkned unto my counsel:* Spiritual judgments forerun temporal, you have it, *Isa.* 6. 10. When the Prophet asked how long? how long in seeing, they should see, and not perceive; and hearing they should hear, and not understand? God answereth, *Until the cities be wasted without an inhabitant, and the houses should be left without men, and the land should be utterly desolate.* In like manner spiritual rewards and mercies never go without something of this life, if not a plenty, yet a sufficiency, food convenient for Gods People. Finally, as *spiritual judgments* are the forerunners of eternal ruin: so spiritual rewards are the more certain forerunners of eternal salvation; they are the things which (as the Apostle speaks) *accompany salvation*, and make men *meet for the Kingdom of God.*

3. But God sometimes *rewards his people with sufferings.* This you may think a strange reward. But yet a reward it is, Christ promiseth to the losers for him, that they should receive *children, houses, lands*, with *persecutions*; and the Apostles, *Act.* 5. 41. *rejoyced they were thought worthy to suffer shame for his name-sake.* God honoureth that man whom he calleth out to be a witness

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for him, and to carry his croſs after him. *Job* ſpeaketh of other afflictions, and cryeth out, *Job* 7. 17. *Lord, what is man that thou ſhouldſt magnifie him? that thou ſhouldſt ſet thine heart upon him? that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every morning, and try him every moment?* What need we more than what the Apoſtle aſſureth us? *Heb.* 12. *That whom the Lord loveth, he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every child whom he receiveth: Our light and momentany afflictions* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *ſhall work for us a far more eternal and exceeding weight of glory: and if we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo be glorified together with him,* Rom. 1. 17. This variety of rewards our heavenly Father hath. The rewards of the righteous from God are not uniform, but always certain and conſtant: one way or other, Gods Providence is always doing them good, and rewarding their righteous deeds: and this muſt neceſſarily be true upon the Apoſtles *Hypotheſis, That all things ſhall work together for the good of them that love God.* But I haſten to the Application.

Uſe 1. In the firſt place let me recommend this to your obſervation. Though there be ſuch a vaſt difference between good and evil in their own intrinſick natures, as might juſtly allure us into the embraces of the former, and ſcare every man from the purſuit of the latter; yet ſuch is our nature, that we ſtand in need of encouragements to the former by rewards, and by the terrors of the Lord to be ſcared from the latter; and there cannot be any thing more effectual with us to diſcourage ſin, and incourage goodneſs, than if we can effectually perſwade our ſelves, that the puniſhment of ſin is both *certain* and *conſtant*, and the *reward of righteouſneſs* is ſo alſo. This is the point I have endeavoured to demonſtrate, and you have heard that the reaſon of any ones preſumption of the contrary, is their looking at nothing as a *puniſhment* or a *reward* but what is ſenſible, than which we cannot be guilty of a greater miſtake, nor any of worſer conſequence, as to the malign influence it will have upon our lives, and (conſequently) upon our eternal ſtate. But conſider what hath been ſaid, and judg whether a man can do any thing to the greater ruin of himſelf, than to go on in an impenitent and reſolved courſe of ſinning againſt God. Poſſibly you do obſerve, that as to outward things it is much one with a profane ſwearer and blaſphemer, as with the man that reverenceth the glorious God, and feareth an oath, *Eccleſ.* 9. 2. with the drunkard, as

with

with him that is sober; with the chast, as with the unclean; with the Sabbath-breaker, as with him that *remembers to keep holy Gods day*; nay the profane lawless sinner is in greater honour and power than the other, richer than the other: and this incourageth thee to joyn with them. But poor creature! hath he that hath many blessings, but one curse, think'st thou? Observe well that same prosperous sinner, and tell me if *every day* he doth not grow worse, if *according to his pastures*, he be not filled with all the fruits of unrighteousness, if he be not given up to a *blind mind*, an hard heart, vile affections, if thou doest not observe that his conscience is seared, and branded with an hot iron, as it were, that he grows past feeling. If thou seest this, say not *he is not punished*, he is punished with a witness. Is a sealing up to damnation no punishment? According to our law you know malefactors are first seared with an hot-iron, upon their next miscarriage they are hanged. It is Gods method, when once a soul is seared with an hot-iron, given up to be *past feeling*, to damn him next without mercy. Look well upon the sinner, and thou wilt discern God is angry every day with him, he is every day fitting for Hell-flames, Is this no punishment? On the other side *thou seest the man according to Gods heart*, walking sadly; he is plagued every night, chastned every morning, he is poor and needy, hungry and thirsty, in prisons, in deaths often, pursued by the falcons of the world, as a partridg upon the mountains, persecuted on all hands. Thou concludest contrary to the Scripture, *That he hath washed his hands in vain, and cleansed his soul to no purpose: verily there is no reward for the righteous.* But harken poor creature. Had *Esau's* Father many blessings? and hath *Jacob's* God but one sort? Thou seest his poverty and want, but doest thou see how he hath learned in all estates to be content, and hath changed his name into a *quod vult Deus.* And certainly *godliness with contentment is great gain.* A poor contented *Lazarus*, is an happier and richer man, than a discontented covetous *Dives.* Thou seest how he is afflicted every day, how full of troubles his life is; but thou doest not see the serenity of his spirit, the peace of his conscience: his joy in the Holy Ghost, his glorying and rejoycing in tribulations, as his tribulations work patience, his patience experience, and his experience hope. Mark, sirs, the *upright men, consider the just men*, you will see their ends to be peace; yea in this life you will see them more indisturbed by troubles, and inconcerned in the ruffles

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of the world than other men. The more you obſerve, the more you will be confirmed in this truth, that the Providence of God will certainly reward, yea is conſtantly rewarding him that worketh righteouſneſs.

Uſe 2. But ſecondly, what a *trembling* and *terror* ſhould this Obſervation *ſtrike into the loins of every ſinner; what an engagement ſhould it lay upon them to repent, and turn from the wickedneſs of their way!* Each part of this Obſervation ought to be improved for this purpoſe. Impunity in ſinning, is a great encouragement to the ſinner: the heart of man ſtands bent to his luſts, and if he fancieth that he may eſcape the hands of Divine Juſtice, or that he doth eſcape, and thrive, and proſper in his wicked courſes, it wonderfully imboldneth him to go on; but if the vengeance againſt him be certain, if his iniquity will certainly find him out, that he may as well hope not to dye, as not to be thrown into Hell when he dyes; and if the wrath of God be already kindled againſt him, and God be already puniſhing him, What hope? what incouragement can he then have? Now this you have heard is the ſinners caſe. I remember when that great plague was began amongſt the *Iſraelites*, upon their murmuring againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*, after the death of *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, *Numb.* 16. 46. *Moſes* biddeth *Aaron take a cenſer, and put fire therein from the Altar, and put incenſe thereon, and go quickly to the congregation* (ſaith he) *and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord, the plague is begun.* Is here an impenitent ſinner before the Lord? one that hath been a *drunkard*, a *ſwearer*, a *profane perſon*, or that hath lived without God in the world, that bleſſeth himſelf with vain hopes or preſumptions, that he ſhall eſcape the Judgment of God, or may eſcape it; that his ſoul is at preſent free from fears, he thriveth, he proſpereth in the world, and his proſperity blindeth his eyes, that he cannot ſee the hell into which he is dropping, and ſo maketh no haſte to deliver himſelf from the wrath that is to come? To ſuch a one let me ſpeak, (oh that my counſel might be acceptable!) *take thy cenſer, put fire thereon from the Altar, and put on incenſe, and go quickly, and make an atonement for thy ſoul.* Theſe are indeed things not in thy power, but my meaning is, Betake thy ſelf quickly to the great work of repentance, which lyes not ſo much in tears and humiliation, as in the change of thy heart, in thy turning from the wickedneſs of

thy way, breaking off from thy ſinful courſes. Betake thy ſelf unto the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. It is he who hath the *golden cenſer, to whom is given much incenſe*, Rev. 8. 3. It is he, *Rom.* 5. 11. *By whom we muſt receive the atonement.* Whatever you may think, *wrath is gone forth againſt you*, the plague in your ſouls is begun: you are in health, not ſick, not in pain as other men; not ſo croſſed in your eſtates and relations, as ſome other men; but for all this wrath may be gone forth againſt you, the plague may be begun within you. Let me examine you a little, do not you find that your mind is more blind, your underſtanding more dark, your affections more vile and ſenſual, your conſciences are more benummed and ſtupid? Is not the plague then began? Can there be more dreadful indications of Divine Wrath againſt you? The ax is laid to the *very root of your tree*; if you do not now bring forth better fruit, you will ſuddenly be cut down and caſt into hell-fire.

Again, What an incouragement to repentance is it, to hear, *That he who worketh righteouſneſs, ſhall moſt certainly be rewarded*, yea that he is rewarded every day? Thou that liveſt and goeſt on in a courſe of bold and preſumptuous ſinning, what peace haſt thou when thou lyeſt down, or when thou riſeſt up? Art not thou like a bankrupt in the world, or one who is much behind-hand, that cannot abide to look into his books? no more canſt thou endure to behold thy conſcience, or to call thy ſelf to an account; it may be thou haſt *quietem ex ſomno*, ſuch a quiet as a man in a dead ſleep hath. The man that worketh righteouſneſs, can call himſelf often to account, and when he hath done, lye down and ſleep in peace, either in a full aſſurance, or a good hope, at leaſt through grace, that God hath pardoned and accepted him. Let therefore my counſel this day be acceptable unto you, *break up the fallow-grounds of your hearts, ſow unto your ſelves in righteouſneſs, believe that the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect thereof quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.*

Uſe 3. Finally, *What an encouragement here is to the people of God under all Gods ſevere diſpenſations to them, to go on doing good.* Do not defame the God of Heaven, with ſaying or thinking that you *cleanſe your hands in vain*, nor that he taketh a long day to reward them that work in his work. *Behold* (ſaith our Lord) *I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every one according as his work ſhall be.* It will not be long before Chriſt will come with

with this great reward; but as he puniſheth the wicked, ſo he rewardeth alſo the righteous man every day: it may be he doth not reward thee with a *long life*, an *healthful body*, *a plentiful eſtate*, other accomodations of this life; his wiſdom ſeeth not theſe things fit for thee, he knoweth thy heart, thy temper; but haſt thou not a quiet conſcience, a ſerenity of mind? or art thou not *ſtrengthened with might in the inward man? doth not Chriſt dwell in thy heart by faith? art thou not rooted and grounded in love, and able in ſome meaſure to comprehend with all Saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and heighth, and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledg, that thou mayeſt be filled with all the fulneſs of God? Thou art* (it may be) *troubled on every ſide, but art thou diſtreſſed?* thou art *perplexed*, but art thou in *deſpair?* thou art *perſecuted*, but art thou *forſaken?* thou art *caſt down*, but art thou *deſtroyed?* Thou beareſt about in thy body, *the dying of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that the life alſo of Jeſus might be made manifeſt in thy body*, 2 Cor. 4. 9, 10. Is this no reward? It may be it is not the reward thou lookedſt for, but it is that reward which God ſeeth fitteſt for thee. It is not all that thou ſhalt have, when he ſhall come, whoſe reward is with him (and he telleth thee that will be quickly), thou mayeſt expect fuller and greater things; in the mean time thou haſt a *viaticum*, an enough for thy paſſage through the wilderneſs. The work of God is a wages to it ſelf, but God gives thee wages beſides; yea, and *eye hath not ſeen, nor hath ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, What great things God hath further prepared for them that love him*; ſay not then, *that thou ſerveſt God for nothing, and faint not, nor be weary of well-doing: for you ſhall reap if you faint not.*

SERMON XXVIII.

Psal. CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

THe *these things* mentioned in the Text (as I have formerly told you, and you may easily assure your selves from the Context of the *Psalm*), are the great and various motions of *Actual Providence*, concerning which, I am recommending to you divers things that I conceive as true, so very observable. Thirteen I have discoursed, I proceed to another, which will also concern the motions of this Actual Providence, in the distribution of rewards and punishments. The Observation is this:

Observ. 14. *The Providence of God doth sometimes reward the intentions of his people, where he doth not allow of, and approve, the actions which should be the product of those intentions; and very often reward some actions, from which he hath service, where he by no means allows the agents design and intention.* In the handling of which, I shall first justifie the Observation by instances. Secondly, I shall shew you *the reasonableness of this motion of Providence.* And lastly, I shall *make some Application of it.*

I say first, *The Actual Providence of God doth sometimes allow of, approve, and reward the general good intentions of his people; when yet he doth not, and will not allow of those actions, which should be the product of such designs and intentions.* This evidently appeareth in that famous instance of *David*, recorded in holy Writ, both in the 2 *Sam.* 7. and in 1 *Chron.* 17. The story is this: *David's* life until that time, had been a life of a great deal of trouble and distraction; he had many Enemies both before and after he came to the Throne; but at length *God* (saith the Text) *had given him rest round about from all his enemies.* The good man pre-

presently begins now to think what eminent service he should do for God. At length he considers, that there was no publick place for the Worship of God, nothing but a Tabernacle; he had built himself a fine house of Cedar, but the ark, the symbol of Gods Presence with his People, that dwelt in *Curtains* (as he expresseth it, *ver.* 2.) But this being a thing which concerned the Worship of God, as to which above all things *the Lord our God is a jealous God*; *David*, though a great Prince, a great Prophet, a man according to Gods own heart, would do nothing till he had advised with the Prophet *Nathan*: *Nathan bids him to go, and to do all that was in his heart*; *for* (saith he) *the Lord is with thee.* The good man was but a man, and was mistaken; God did not allow of the action,

1. *Because he had not directed as yet any such thing*, ver. 7. In all the places *wherein I have walked* (saith he) *with the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel* [or Judges of *Israel*] *whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build you not me an house of Cedar*: he repeateth the same reason again, 1 *Chron.* 17.6. Indeed there is another reason given, 1 *Chron.* 22.8. *Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house to my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.* So 1 *Chron.* 28. 3. For those two reasons God disapproved the action, and reserved it for *Solomon* his son, then it became an institution: *Solomon* might lawfully undertake it, and did do it. But yet you shall find, that God eminently rewarded this good intention and purpose of *Davids* heart, as you shall read at large, 2 *Sam.* 7. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. and to that degree, that *David*, ver. 18. thought himself obliged to offer up unto God a particular *sacrifice of thanksgiving*, and to offer up those praises to God, which you shall read at large in that Chapter, from the 18*th* verse, to the end of the Chapter. It is plain, that God only rewarded his general purpose, and good intention; for the act or issue of that intention and purpose, the Lord accepted not, but accepted his *good will* for the deed, which he rejected. For an instance on the other side, take *Jehu*. *Jehu* did a *good act*, that is, the thing which God commanded him: he indeed did it possibly in an ill manner, with ill circumstances, which caused God to threaten, that he would avenge the blood of *Jezreel* upon the house of *Jehu*, 2 *King.* 9.7. When the Prophet anointed him that was his Commission, *Thou shalt smite the house*

of Ahab thy maſter, that I may avenge the blood of my ſervants the Prophets, and the blood of all the righteous ſervants of the Lord at the hand of Jezebel; when it was done, God rewarded him for it, 2 *King.* 10. 30. *Becauſe* (ſaith God) *thou haſt done well in my eyes, in executing that which is right in mine eyes; and haſt done unto the houſe of Ahab, according to all that was in mine heart, thy children to the fourth generation ſhall ſit on the throne of Iſrael.* But yet *Jehu*'s deſign and intention in all this was naught, he intended no more than to make himſelf King; he pretended indeed a zeal for the Lord, but intended nothing but the advancement of himſelf, and his family; for the Scripture ſaith, *ver.* 31. of that 10*th* Chapter, *That Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Iſrael with all his heart, for he departed not from the ſins of Jeroboam, which made Iſrael to ſin.* God here rewarded the action done at his command, and in the execution of his will, but abhorred the intentions and deſigns that were in *Jehu's* heart upon the undertaking and performance of it. Take another inſtance, it is that which I have formerly inſiſted upon in the 10*th* of *Iſaiah*, v. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. It is plain that God approved of the *Aſſyrian*'s actions againſt *Iſrael*, he calls them the *rod of his anger*, ver. 5. he ſaith, *ver.* 6. *That he would ſend him againſt an hypocritical nation, and againſt the people of his wrath he would give him a charge, to take the ſpoil, and take the prey, and to tread them down like mire in the ſtreets: Howbeit*, ſaith God, *he meaneth not ſo, neither doth his heart think ſo; but it is in his heart to deſtroy, and cut off nations not a few.* The *Aſſyrian* had nothing but ſinful intentions, he aimed at nothing but *ſpoil* and *plunder*, and accordingly executed Gods Will; upon which, *ver.* 12. God threatneth, *That when he had performed his whole work upon Mount Zion, and upon Hieruſalem, he would puniſh the fruit of the ſtout heart of the King of Aſſyria, and the glory of all his looks:* and *ver.* 16. *That he would ſend amongſt his ſtrong ones leanneſs, and under his glory kindle a burning, the burning of a fire.* More inſtances might be given of either ſort, but theſe are enough. Let me proceed in ſhewing you the reaſonableneſs of Divine Providence in theſe motions.

1. On the part of wicked men, it is but reaſonable; *Becauſe in ſuch actions they do God ſervice, and it is not reaſonable they ſhould ſerve God for nothing.* You have a remarkable text for this, *Ezek.* 29. 18, 19. *Son of man* (ſaith God to *Ezekiel*), *Nebuchadnezzar*

King of Babilon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus, every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he served against it. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar King of Babilon, and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey, and it shall be the wages for his army: I have given him the land of Egypt for the labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord. The King of *Babilon* never intentionally wrought for God, undoubtedly what the Lord said of *Assyria*, was applicable to *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babilon*; spoil, and plunder, and dominion, was all which he aimed at, he never intended to work for God: but yet the work was what was Gods Will should be done, and what God had incited him to do; *he wrought for me* (saith God) he did service, and a great service, he hath had no wages for it, none shall work for me and be unpaid, I will give him the land of *Egypt* for his pay. So *Jehu*, he wrought for God, and did a great service against the house of *Ahab*; *I will pay him*, saith God. *Jehu* shall never say he wrought for nothing, his sons shall sit upon the Throne to the fourth generation. Nay upon this account oft-times God rewardeth wicked men for some actions, and afterwards punisheth them for the manner of their doing of those actions; it is possible men may do what God commandeth them, and yet not obey God. God may reward men for their action, as it is a service to him, and yet punish them for their ill-doing of the action.

2. On the part of good men, where God rewardeth the good design, intention, and purpose, whiles yet he disalloweth the action, the motion of Providence seemeth yet more reasonable; if we but consider, *that it is the heart which God principally requires, looketh at, and accepteth.* And where the heart is right, the mistake in the action can be but a lapse of humane frailty and weakness. Now where the sincere purpose and design, and counsel of the heart is right, there the heart must be right with God. I say the heart is that which God requireth, *My son* (saith he) *give me thy heart*, and you shall find where that is right bent and inclined. God passeth over a great many errors and failings in the conversation: and this is what God said in this very case, 1 *King.* 8. 18. *Whereas it was in thine heart to build me an house, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.* The Lord *looketh on the heart*, and ordinarily

dinarily in Scripture he accounteth men to have done good or evil, according as their hearts were *prepared* or *set*. *Rohoboam did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord*, 2 Chron. 12. 14. Now where there is a good intention, design, and purpose, there the heart is right. Only here I must caution you as to two things: 1. *That you do not think that a pretence of a good heart or intention will do you any service.* It is one thing to pretend a good heart, another thing to have it. *Jehu* pretended a *great zeal for God*, but had nothing less. 2. You must take heed of thinking, that a good intention will justifie a *sinful action*; but a *sincere* and *good intention*, I say is accepted of God, and often rewarded by him, where the action is such as God approveth not, and makes an error in action to be but a sin of infirmity; for where the heart stands right, and truly designs the honour of God, the man cannot in that action wilfully dishonour God: and this is enough to make this motion of Providence appear to you very reasonable. Before I come to apply this Observation, I shall only give you one or two Cautions.

1. *They are only rewards of this life, by which God rewards the services of wicked men*, whose heart in the action is not right. *Jehu* was rewarded, but it was only with a temporary dominion, his sons for four generations sate upon the Throne of *Israel*. *Assyria* was rewarded for his service against *Israel*; but it was only with spoil and plunder, and the enlargment of his Dominions; for the rewards of *grace* and *glory*, they are never given to any, whose heart is not right with God.

2. They are but *temporary rewards, after the enjoyment of which for a time, God usually punisheth the sinner*. Such was the reward of *Jehu*, it lasted but four generations, and then God visited the blood of *Jezreel* upon the house of *Jehu*: It was but a little time that *Assyria*, that *Nebuchadnezzar* the King of *Babylon* joyed in the reward which God gave him for the great service with which he had made his Army to serve against *Tyrus*, for the Prophets prophecied of the destruction of *Babylon* soon after: and the Scripture tells us how it was by the *Persian* Monarch. These things premised, I now come to the Application: And, 1. By way of *Instruction*.

Use 1. We may learn hence what a *good God we serve*: no man serveth God for nothing. The least service that men do for God

God, shall have its proportionable reward. His very Enemies shall not do actions for him, but they shall have a recompence for them. The liberality of God, even to the worst of men, serving him by the by, and looking quite another way when they are at Gods Oars, should commend God unto us all; and may mightily help the People of God to conclude, that their labour of love for God shall not be forgotten by him.

Use 2. In the second place, this will *instruct you in one great reason of what is such a beam oft-times in the eyes of Gods best servants:* I mean *the prosperity, power, and greatness of vile men.* I know it is not always the cause, but oft-times it is. They have done some actions, from which God hath had a service; it may be God hath used them to do some great piece of service for his Church, so you know he used *Cyrus* (upon which the Scripture calleth him Gods servant), it may be they have done some service for God against his People apostatizing: thus *Assyria* was the rod of Gods anger, though he did not mean so. God had *sent him* against an *hypocritical Nation.* There are many ways by which wicked men may do God service, while they intend nothing so. It may be sometimes God will make use of them to relieve his poor servants in distress, taking advantage of their good natures, or some relation they have to them, *&c.* And this, though it may be we cannot always give account of the particular cause, is the reason why God doth great things for them, as to the good things of this life. But there are two more proper branches of Application, which I further aim at, the one concerning sinners more properly; the other concerning such whose hearts are right with God.

Use 3. In the third place, this Observation looketh upon all men, even the worst of men, and speaketh to them for two things:

1. *That they would imploy all the talents which God hath given them in some service of God.* Sirs, you can none of you work for a more liberal and bountiful master; the world is the great thing in the eyes of worldly men, they would be *rich*, and *great*, and *honourable*, they have no faith, for the riches of glory, no sense of the riches of grace; their language is, *What will you give me?* and understand no greater things that God hath to give, than

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sensible things. Now admit their judgment were right, yet it were their greatest policy to be doing those things which are materially good, and which are unquestionably within their power to do, to be making use of their estates, which they spend in luxury and wantonness, in drinking and gaming, *&c.* in cloathing the naked, feeding the hungry; the power and interest which God hath given them, in the protection of such as fear God, and delivering of them from the hands of oppressors. I remember it was the counsel of the Prophet *Daniel*, to a Heathen King, *Dan.* 4 27. *Wherefore, O King, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thy iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthning of thy tranquillity.* It is a text, that is not without its difficulties, and about which there hath been a great contention betwixt *Papists* and *Protestants*, the Papists from it stifly contending for their Doctrine of Merits and Satisfaction, by works of *mercy* and *charity*. But whiles themselves grant, that works by which we can merit, must be such as are more than strict duty, and Justice and Charity are the two only things which the Prophet doth here advise, which we know are duties required of all in innumerable places of Scripture, there can be little pretence for any such building upon this foundation. *Daniel* is plainly giving counsel to that Prince, how he might, if not finally avoid, yet for a time turn away that fierce wrath of God which he saw was began to kindle against him; he adviseth him to do this, by breaking off his tyrannical oppression, and shewing mercy, instead of that cruelty with which the former part of his reign had been stained. Now mark the argument, *If*, saith he, *it may be a lengthning of thy tranquillity.* I know your margents, tell you it may be read, *It shall be an healing to your error*, about which some less judicious Papists make a stir: but their own great *Arias Montanus* reads it, it shall be a *prolongation of thy peace*. Their vulgar *Lat.* reads it, *perhaps he will pardon thy sins:* the *septuagint* ἴσως ἔσαι μακρόθυμος, perhaps God will bear long with thy sins, *&c.* However (though indeed in that sense it doth not so sute my present purpose) there is no doubt, but *restitution* is an healing of the error of injustice and oppression amongst men, though it be impossible that it should remove the guilt of sin before God. But I have digressed too far. Let my counsel be acceptable now to every sinner, that hath any interest in the world, any talent of riches or honour, power

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or intereſt, which he might improve in the doing of any thing which God hath commanded. If he be one that hath no regard to his ſoul, but meerly to his intereſt in the world, it is the beſt improvement that he can poſſibly make of it. If a man had ſet his heart againſt the God of Heaven, and deſigned never intentionally to ſerve and honour him, but to make the world and his belly his God, without any belief of, or regard to an eternal well-being; yet it were his greateſt policy to do things materially good, in order to the obtaining of that portion in this life, for him and his poſterity, upon which he is wholly intent.

2. But ſecondly, This obſervation *ſpeaketh aloud to all to take heed of bleſſing themſelves upon their worldly circumſtances.* It is a thing that we are very prone to, to conclude, to the acceptation of our perſons, and our works, from our outward proſperity. They neither ſignifie any thing to us, as to the *perfect goodneſs of the work*, nor yet as to any *eternal reward*, no, *nor a laſting reward in this life.* We uſe to ſay, *Bonum ex cauſis integris, malum ex quolibet defectu*, a work is made evil by any defect in it, the *leaſt fly* maketh the *Apothecaries box of oyntment to ſtink*; the action muſt be *formally*, as well as *materially* good; not only what God hath required, but it muſt be done with a *true heart*, deſigning the glory and ſervice of God, and in a true manner, according to that rule which he hath given us for the performance of it, or it cannot be acceptable to a pure and holy God: nor do *theſe rewards* ſignifie any thing as to our *eternal reward and recompence.* A man may for a work be rewarded in this life, and yet damned in the world to come: *he hath had his reward.* I remember Chriſt ſaith ſo of the Phariſees prayers and faſtings, *Mat.* 6. *They have their reward:* the diſciples of Chriſt that act ſincerely, *they ſhall be recompenced in the reſurrection of the juſt.* Hypocrites *have their reward*, in the honour and applauſe they have, in the riches and honour which God giveth them. God is out of their debt. No, nor ſecondly (which poſſibly to them is more terrible) theſe kind of *recompences* are but temporary things for a little time. *Jehu* had taken out all his payment from God for his ſervice againſt the houſe of *Ahab* in four generations. *Aſſyria* and *Babylon* had taken out their rewards for their ſervices much ſooner.

Uſe 4. In the next place, This Obſervation may be of very great uſe, both *for the comfort and incouragement of ſuch*, whoſe

hearts are *right with God.* For their *comfort* as to what they have done, for their *incouragement* to go on yet in their motions and designs for God. 1. For their *comfort.* It must be laid down for a *substratum* to the following part of my discourse upon this Theme, That no man can be called a child of God, but he who doth not serve God by the by, *tanquam aliud agens*, in the mean time eying some other design, and setting up to himself some other end; but he who in his actions sets himself with a full purpose of heart, to seek, and honour, and glorifie God, he may miss his mark, either through the mistake of his eye, or his hand, but his face is thitherward, that's the white at which he aims; he hath set the honour and glory of God before him as his mark, and towards it, it is, that he presseth forward: he may mistake (as *David* did) thinking something will be for the honour of God, which will not; or come short as to the issue, not being able to bring his design to a desired issue; but he taketh his aim right, and setteth up his mark right. Now failers in these cases, when once discerned by the souls of Christians, prove oft-times causes of great trouble, and exceeding sad reflexions to them; and nothing can be thought of as more proper to give them relief, than what I have been at this time discoursing of. That when God doth not, cannot allow of the action as integrally good and perfect, yet he will *reward the good intention*, the design and purpose in the childs of Gods heart. Methinks in this case it is a sweet text, (they are the words of *Solomon* upon the dedication of the Temple which he had builded, 1 *King.* 8. 18.) *And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart: Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house, but thy son that is come out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name.* There are in that text these things remarkable. 1. *David* had an intention to build God an house. 2. He did not build this house. 3. God did not allow of the action. God sent him word by *Nathan* he should not do it (as you have heard before). Yet 3. God accepted his good design, his general good intention. *Thou didst well* (saith God) *that it was in thine heart.* 4. God did not only accept this good design and intention, but he also rewards it: *Nevertheless* (saith he) *thy son that is come out of thy loins, he shall build me an house:* thou shalt not have the honour of it, but thy son shall have the honour of it. *David* was undertaking

dertaking a matter in the worſhip of God, without any ſpecial direction; God upon this createth an inſtitution, and legitimateth the action for his ſon. I ſay it is an admirable text, if it be well digeſted, to relieve the ſpirits of the People of God under their troubles for their imperfect performances. A Chriſtian prays, he ſanctifieth a Sabbath, he ſetteth himſelf to ſeek the Lord in any piece of inſtituted worſhip; when he reflecteth upon it, and compareth it with the perfect rule, he ſits down wonderfully troubled, conſidering he hath done nothing as he ought to do; he hath prayed, but with a wofully wandring, diſtracted, and diſtempered heart; his heart hath not bled while he hath been confeſſing of ſins, nor believed enough while he hath been putting up his ſupplications to the God of Heaven, nor been raiſed enough in the Meditations of the Divine Goodneſs, whiles his tongue hath been uttering the good things which God hath done for him: To what purpoſe ſhould he do any thing more, who doth nothing as he ought to do it? I would but ask a poor Chriſtian, thus troubled upon any performance, *Was it in thine heart to honour God in what thou didſt?* thou cameſt to *hear the word of God*, or thou cameſt to *humble thy ſelf before God by faſting*, or thou cameſt *to prayer*, or to *receive a ſacrament*; thou reflecteſt upon the action done, thou ſeeſt it full of imperfections, thou haſt not honoured God as thou deſiredſt, thy heart hath not been perfect with God. But what was in thine heart in theſe undertakings? was it in thine heart to mock God, or to ſerve God? was not this thy deſign to humble thy ſoul before the Lord, to pay an homage which thy ſoul owed unto God? was it not in thine heart to ſerve God? If it were, believe that thou heareſt God ſaying to thee, Whereas it was in thine heart to pray, to praiſe, to humble thy ſelf before me, to do what I commanded thee to do, *thou didſt well that it was in thine heart:* it may be thou didſt not well in the action, it was not well done in thine hand; but this was well, *that it was in thine heart.* As we ſometimes refuſe ſomething from our friend, and ſay, *I thank you as much as if you did it, but it is needleſs; I deſire you to ſpare your pains, I care not for it, or I deſire not it ſhould be done yet, but yet I take it as kindly as if you did it.* Or as we ſometimes accept of what a poor child or ſervant hath done for us, though we do not like it as done to our minds, and excuſe it by ſaying, *Poor child! it intended well:* ſo God doth

with us; methinks what he said to *David*, was as much as if he had said, *I do not yet need any other house then I have, I do not care for it:* but this thou didst not know, *David*. Thou didst well that it was in thine heart, thou hadst a good general design and intention: and so to us, this prayer, this service, this homage is not every way perfect, but yet it was in my childs heart to honour me, and to obey my commands. In this he hath done well, I will accept it, because it was in his heart, 2*Cor.* 8. *If there be a willing mind* (saith the Apostle) *it is accepted, not according to what a man hath not, but according to what he hath.* The Apostle speaketh there with reference to alms, but it is as true as to all other duties; if there be a willing mind, a true heart, it is accepted of God: I shall only caution you, that you mistake not this *willing mind* for a pitiful *wish* and *velleity*, without a setled steady purpose and resolution of heart, and such an indeavour, as is within the reach and compass of our power; so thatthere wanteth not a desire and indeavour, but only a strength and ability to perform. But if there be that, it is of wonderful comfort to us, under all our accusations and judgings of our selves. There is no child of God, but it is in his heart to do better than he doth, it is in his heart to glorifie God in every duty, in every action, in the whole of his conversation; why if it be in his heart, God saith to him, *Thou hast done well that it was in thine heart.* Nay this Meditation hath this advantage, *That God will reward the good that is in his peoples hearts, not only with temporary, but with eternal rewards:* and for this the Lord Jesus Christ is to be praised, who hath satisfied Divine Justice for us, and perfectly fulfilled the law for us, and procured this of his Father, *That the will should be accepted for the deed.* Do not therefore think ever to live in any view of your own perfection, you will never do that: *Study only to live in the view of your own sincerity*, to find that your hearts are right in the sight of God, take heed of heart-falshood; ah, that is dreadful to find our hearts false with God. Ah! but will some jealous soul say, How shall I know this? how shall I know if my heart be right with God in any action, when I see the action is not right, but cometh short of the glory of God? I answer, thou shalt easily know, if thou doest but consider what the heart does in humane actions: and that you shall understand in three particulars: 1. *It is the eye that takes the aim at the mark.* 2. *It*

is that which giveth ſtrength to the bow. 3. *It is that which gives a man pleaſure in the action.*

1. *The heart is that which* (as the eye in ſhooting) *gives or takes the aim at the mark.* The tongue ſpeaks in prayer, and the outward man moves in actions of religious worſhip; but the heart now takes the *aim*, and directeth the *intention of the action.* The end of all our actions, is either, 1. *The glory of God:* or, 2. *Our ſelves, our own honour*, &c. If the heart be right with God in actions, the ſcope, deſign, and intention of the ſoul is to glorifie God, *Pſal.* 38. 9. *All my deſire is toward thee*, Pſal. 25. 15. *Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.*

2. *The heart is that which in humane actions gives ſtrength to the bow.* The ſtrength of a ſpiritual action lyes in the *zeal* or *heat of affection which attendeth the action:* now the heat of this is in the heart. Where a mans heart is not in an action, he acts coldly, he moveth ſlowly, the wheels of a ſoul are in the heart. Where the heart is in an action, it runs, it makes haſte, and delayeth not, it acteth with vigour and fervency.

3. Laſtly, *The heart is that which gives a ſoul delight and pleaſure in an action.* Where the heart is not in prayer, in hearing, there is no pleaſure, no ſweetneſs, no delight affecting the ſoul. Examine now thy ſelf by theſe things, thou doeſt that which is materially good, but thou doubteſt whether in thy actions thy heart be right with God. Search and ſee what thy aim and ſcope was: What didſt thou propoſe to thy ſelf in the action? with what life, vigour, and ſtrength didſt thou ſet upon thy action? what pleaſure and delight didſt thou take in the action? though indeed much of the laſt may be kindled in an hour of temptation or deſertion, where the ſoul feeleth not thoſe incomes of divine aſſiſtance, nor that freedom of ſpirit which it hath at other times experienced; yet always the heart aims right, and puts on with what ſtrength it hath; it (like *Sampſon*) riſeth up, and ſays it will do as at other times, though in doing it diſcerneth, that God is departed from it, and is not with it as at other times.

Uſe 5. Again, *How ſhould this encourage us all in the ways of God? notwithſtanding the diſcouragements we may meet with from the temptations of our grand adverſary; or the ſuggeſtions of our con-*

consciences, founded upon the demonstrable truth of the imperfections of our best services. We say, Use maketh perfectness, and the Scripture saith, That the man of clean hands will grow stronger and stronger; but in the mean time, acceptation doth not depend upon gradual perfection, but upon the perfection of sincerity, when the design, the purpose, the intention is sincere; when the heart is set right for God, and aims truly at the glory of God, and the fulfilling of his Will, then it is accepted; and indeed it is the most reasonable thing in the world, that we should agree with this. For that man or woman hath either a strange imperfect *notion of the nature of God, or of the law of God,* that can expect that his duties should be accepted for their gradual perfections, or any intrinsecal value in them. I say he that thus thinks, neither knows God as he ought to know him, nor yet his own measures. But if God will accept of, and reward a good intention, a good purpose and design, while we find our hearts right bent, and inclined for God, we have no reason to be discouraged from action.

Use 6. I shall conclude with an Exhortation unto all, *In this thing to be like God.* You have heard that God sometimes allows not an action, where yet he rewardeth the *good intention* designing the action: what an example is this for us, who may dissent from some of our *Forefathers.* Our Forefathers might be mistaken in the Utensils, and Ornaments, and Rites of Gods house and worship, as well as *David* was in his design for the building of God an house, and while we think they were so, we cannot tread in their steps, it would be wickedness to us.

SER-

SERMON XXIX.

Pſalm CVII. 43.

Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things: even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

I Am proceeding ſtill, in directing your Obſervation of the motions of *Divine Providence*, eſpecially in the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments. Two things I have already of this nature obſerved, I now proceed to a third, which will make a Fifteenth Obſervation.

Obſerv. 15. *It is a very ordinary thing for the Providence of God to diſtribute the afflictions and puniſhments of this life, to the very beſt of his people; and as to them ſometimes to ſpare the very worſt of men.* I muſt ſtill mind you that there is no rule ſo general, but it will admit exceptions as to particular caſes, though this hath as few as any. The Apoſtle hath told us, *Heb.* 12. 6. *Whom the Lord loveth, he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth: if you endure chaſtening, God dealeth with us as with ſons: for what ſon is he whom the Father chaſteneth not: but if you be without chaſtening, whereof all are partakers, then are you baſtards, and not ſons.* Hence that ſo uſually quoted paſſage of one of the ancients, *Unicum Deus habuit filium ſine peccato, nullum ſine flagello*; God had one, and but one Son without ſin, but he never had any Son without a croſs. Hence ſome particular ſervants of God, have been under ſome temptations at ſome times, to queſtion their ſtate as to the favour of God, becauſe their life hath had ſo little of the croſs in it: but they have been rare examples, to whom Satan hath had an advantage to ſuggeſt ſuch a thought. And as Divines determine it difficult to determine, what ſin a child of God may not fall into, and juſtly too, when-as *David* fell into murther and adultery, *Lot* into drunkenneſs and inceſt, and even *Peter curſed* and *ſware*, and denied his maſter: ſo

ſo it is a matter more difficult to ſay what puniſhment of this life may not fall upon the beſt of men. Indeed ſome *Antinomians* have made it a queſtion, *Whether the afflictions of Gods People may or ought to be called puniſhments or judgments*; but it is a *ſtrife* which they would raiſe about words: if they by puniſhments or judgments, intend ſuch legal demands as God ſhould make for ſatisfaction to his Juſtice, none who underſtandeth what he ſaith, will call the afflictions of good men *puniſhments* in this ſenſe; if they mean any thing elſe, they much betray their ignorance, for the Scripture expreſly calls them by both. God telleth his People that they ſhould not be altogether *unpuniſhed*; and the Apoſtle telleth us, *That when we are chaſtened, we are judged of the Lord*, 1 Cor. 11. 32. Moſt certain it is, that it is a very ordinary thing for God in the motions of his Providence to diſtribute all kinds of temporary afflictions, to ſuch as moſt fear his glorious Name, and ſometimes as to ſuch, to ſpare even the worſt of men. *Job* expoſtulates it with God, *Job* 21. 7. *Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea are mighty in power? their ſeed is eſtabliſhed in their ſight with them, and their off-ſpring before their eyes; their houſes are ſafe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.* *David* confeſſed, *that his feet were almoſt gone, his ſteps had well-nigh ſlipt*, when he ſaw the *proſperity of the wicked:* though *v.* 9. *they ſet their mouths againſt heaven*; yet *v.* 4. *their ſtrength was firm, and there were no bands in their death; they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men*, v. 7. *Their eyes ſtand out with fatneſs, they have more than heart could wiſh.* In the mean time, *v.* 14. *David* was plagued all the day-long, and *chaſtned every morning.* This motion of Providence hath been evident in the experience of all ages, and there is none who liveth, but may obſerve it every day: but this is accounted one of the Chapters of Divine Providence, which are hard to be underſtood. I ſhall therefore reſerve my further diſcourſe upon it, till I come to the laſt part of my intended diſcourſe, where I ſhall make it my buſineſs to give you an account of it, and at preſent paſs on to ſome further Obſervations.

Obſerv 16. The next thing I ſhall commend to your remark, is this: *That where to humane appearance Providence moveth moſt ſlowly, either in the puniſhment of the ſinner, or the rewarding the righteous, there at laſt it diſtributeth moſt plentifully.* I obſerved to you

you before, that both the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous is certain and constant, though not always *sensible* nor *uniform.* Now I desire you to observe that by how much the *slower it is in the punishment of sinners*, or *in bringing rewards to the righteous*, by so much the greater the rewards of the godly men, and the punishment of sinners are when they come. I mean sensible rewards and punishments, for otherwise it is true, which I before told you, God is punishing sinners and rewarding righteous men every day. But as to *sensible rewards* and *punishments*, God is very often slow in the distributions of them. The Heathens were wont to say, *tardè molunt Deorum molæ*, the Gods Mills grind slowly; and that their Gods had *laneos pedes*, feet shod with wooll. It is most certaintly true of the true and living God. His Mill with which he grindeth sinners to powder is alwayes going, *He is angry with the wicked every day*, but it *grindeth slowly*; he is moving always in order to this end, but he hath *woollen feet*: we cannot hear nor discern his motions. But to speak distinctly, here are two things in this observation. 1. That the *Providence of God* doth ordinarily move *slowly in the distribution of sensible punishments to wicked men, or sensible rewards to righteous men.*

2. *That the more slow it is in the distribution of the one, or of the other, the greater the punishment or reward is ordinarily when it cometh.* I will begin with shewing you the reasonableness of the first.

1. *How else should God justifie his attribute of long-suffering and patience?* The attribute of *clemency, patience, long-suffering, slowness to conceive a wrath*, is an attribute which God maketh himself known by, and doth much glory in, Psal. 103. 8. *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Nehemiah* in his prayer *Neh.* 9. 17. impleadeth God thus, *Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. Joel* maketh use of it as an argument to perswade people to repentance, *Joel.* 2. 13. And *Jonah* telleth God, that he knew him to be such a God, *Jonah* 4. 2. Now how should God justifie this name of his, but in his bearing with sinners a long time, though they be, as the Apostle saith, *Vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.*

2. *How else should God lead men by patience to repentance, and render sinners that continue impenitent inexcusable.* This is that account which the Apostle *Peter* giveth us of this dispensation of

providence. 2 Pet. 3. 9. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men do count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance:* and St. *Paul Rom.* 2. 1. saith, *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man,* v. 4. *despising the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.* When God giveth men and women space to repent, and they repent not, they become inexcusable, and God is justified in the vials of his wrath which he poureth out upon them at last.

3. *How else should God exercise the faith, and patience of his people?* The exercise of faith is upon an *unseen reward,* believing what we have no sensible evidence of; the exercise of *hope* lies in a looking out for it, for *what we see, why do we yet hope for?* (saith the Apostle) the exercise of patience is in waiting for it, and a quiet submission to the will of God, in bearing what the Lord will please to lay upon us, while we are in our way to our promised reward. If Gods providence were not slow in executing his justice, he could not magnifie his own patience and long-suffering, and if he were not slow in the distributions of sensible rewards, he could not exercise our faith or patience: this is the Reason why the Providence of God doth often move slowly in the distribution both of *rewards* and *punishments.*

2. But secondly observe, by how much the slowlier God proceedeth to judgement against sinners, by so much the more *smart the vengeance is when it comes*; and by how much God appeareth more *slow in the rewards of the righteous, by so much the greater the reward is.* It is observed that those men who pass their lives with the least sickness, are usually cut off by, or escape very narrowly from the first sickness they meet with, either because the *constitution of their bodies is so strong, that a light sickness will not shake them but some very acute and malignant distemper,* or because *in their long time of health, they have by degrees contracted a very ill habit of body,* so that when they fall down it is a very hard matter to restore them again. The same may be observed as to Gods providential dispensations to wicked men, there are some against whom God proceedeth a long time very slowly: though he be angry with them every day, yet he spareth them, and doth not fall upon them by any severe dispensations; but when he doth strike he strikes not twice, he maketh a full end. God bore with the *Amorites* a

a great

a great while; they were a wicked people in *Abrahams* time, but their iniquitie was not *full*, *Gen.* 15. 16. God bare with them four hundred years after that, but when he brought judgement upon them, it was a dreadful judgement, as you may both learn by the several commissions given out by God to the *Israelites* against them, and the dreadful destruction of them, of which you read in the book of *Joshua*. Before them God bare with the world a long time, after he had taken up a purpose to destroy them, and revealed it to *Noah*, *Gen.* 6. 1, 2, 3. he gives them yet the space of an hundred and twenty years; but they abusing his patience in that time also, he brought the flood upon them, and consumed them all but *Noahs* family. With that generation of the *Israelites* which came out of the land of *Egypt* the Lord shewed himself *slow to wrath, forty years long the Lord was grieved with that generation*; (forty years is a great while for one generation, the life of man being but seventy years) but at length he destroyed them all, so as only *Caleb* and *Joshua* entred into *Canaan*. God bare two hundred and forty years with the Kingdom of *Israel*, (for so many years there were from their Apostacy in the time of *Jeroboam*, until they were carried away captive *by the King of Assyria*) but then they were so destroyed as to this day none knoweth where they are, or any of their posterity. With the two tribes and an half God yet bare much longer, but at last they were carried into the captivity of *Babylon* for seventy years. After their restoration God bare long with them, though they were exercised under a variety of afflictive providences, till at last they were utterly destroyed by the *Romans* from being a Nation. The like observation might be made of particular persons. It is observed concerning the Kingdom of *Israel* after the defection from the house of *David*, that they never had one good King. Most of them had very short reigns, except *Jeroboam* the son of *Joash* who reigned forty two years, and *Jehu* who had done such service against the house of *Ahab* who reigned twenty eight years. There were two that reigned twenty two years, both wicked men, and heads of several idolatrie: *Jeroboam*, he brought in the *worshipping of the true God by Calves set up at* Dan, *and* Bethel; *and* Ahab, who brought in the worshipping of *Baal*, both of them very wicked men, and God proceeded to execute vengeance slowly upon them; but when it came, it was a dreadful vengeance. Of *Jeroboams* house none but a little Son

came to the grave in peace. For *Ahab* himſelf, you know, he was ſlain in a battel, his queen was thrown headlong out of a window, and her brains daſhed out, and the dogs licked her blood; his ſecond Son was ſlain by *Jehu*: ſeventy more of his Sons were ſlain by the command of *Jehu*. It were eaſie to give you infinite inſtances out of ſtory, but I leave it to your experimental obſervation. Mark any perſon whom you ſee exemplarily wicked, yet God is patient with him a long time, and obſerve what havock God makes with him and his poſterity when he beginneth to reckon with him. And indeed it ſeems very reaſonable if you conſider,

1. That by reaſon of Gods *ſlowneſs to puniſh the ſinner, his ſins are multiplied and aggravated to an exceeding great number and degree.* It was *Solomons* obſervation, which we ſhall ſee verified in our daily experience, Eccl. 8. 11. *Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the heart of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil.* The iniquity of the *Amorites* had not been full, if God had not been ſo patient with them: This makes them, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *treaſure up wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgement of God.* Now the righteous God rendring to every man according to his work, muſt proportion his judgements to peoples ſinnings. The more their ſins are, the greater ſhall his wrath be.

2. *The more patience is abuſed, the more means of grace are loſt, the greater alwayes is divine vengeance.* Now where God proceedeth ſlowly to vengeance, there he exerciſeth moſt patience. There patience is moſt abuſed, there more ſpace and time for repentance is loſt; there is moſt deſpiſing of the riches of divine goodneſs, forbearance and long-ſuffering. *Et læſa patientia fit furor*, abuſed patience turns into fury. It maketh a patient and long-ſuffering God cry out by his Prophet, *Ah! I will eaſe me of mine enemies, and avenge me of my adverſaries*; him that knoweth not how to give up *Ephraim*, to ſet him as *Admah* and *Zeboim*, two of the Cities whom he ſo dreadfully deſtroyed by fire and brimſtone. It maketh God, who is a Lamb in his own nature, to transform himſelf into a *Lion*, a *Leopard*, a *Bare rob'd of her whelps.* O it is a dreadful thing to abuſe much divine patience! Now where the providence of God hath appeared ſlow in puniſhing ſinners, there muſt much patience have been ſhewn. And it muſt have been abuſed too if a ſinner continues hard-hearted and impenitent. *I have given ſpace* (ſaith God) *to repent of her*

her fornication, and she repented not, Rev. 2. 21, 22. *Behold I will cast her into a Bed*, &c. *into great tribulation, and I will kill her children with death.* Besides, that God seldom exerciseth patience long with sinners, but he gives them also other means of grace, and they are abused and slighted. *Noah preached to the old world*; saith God, *My Spirit shall not alwaies strive with man*: and I need not tell you how dreadfully God threatneth *Corazin*, *Bethsaida* and *Capernaum* for their abusing the means of grace they had had above other places. The like might be proved concerning the providence of God in the distributions of rewards; *the slower the motion of Providence is in the giving them, the greater ordinarily the rewards are.* It was a great while before *Abraham* had a Son, but when he had him, it proved to be one that was a great blessing both to his Fathers family and to the world. *Rebeccah* went twenty years without Children, *Gen.* 25. 20, 26. but then *twins struggle in her womb*, and she brings forth two great Princes, and one of them who was to be the head of the only people God had upon the earth. *Rachel* was for some years *barren*, *Gen.* 29. 31. c. 30. v. 1. when God gave her a Child it was *Joseph*, who proved such an eminent blessing to his Fathers house. The Wife of *Manoah* was barren, *Jud.* 13. 2. she bringeth forth *Samson*. *Hannah* 1 *Sam.* 1. was barren, she bringeth forth *Samuel*. *Elizabeth* was *barren*, she brings forth *John* the *Baptist*. Thus you see it as to the blessing of Children. It was a long time before God brought the seed of *Jacob* his servant out of their difficulties, but when he did he brought them into *Canaan*, the Land which the Lord cared for, upon which his eyes were *from the beginning of the year unto the end thereof, a land which flowed with Milk and Hony.* There was a great time betwixt *Josephs* dream and his exaltation in *Egypt*. There were eight years betwixt *Davids Unction* and *Coronation* in *Hebron*. More instances might be given, but it is no more than we shall ordinarily observe in the motions of divine providence; the slower the mercy cometh, the fuller it is and greater blessing when it cometh: Gods people have ordinarily their greatest peace and comforts after their longest, and greatest trials, and afflictions.

The reasonableness of this motion of divine Providence appeareth in this, that look as in punishing of sinners where Providence moveth slowly, it usually hath a great heap of sins to reckon with men for; so here it hath *great faith* and *patience* to reward

in this case. *Tribulation worketh patience,* and *patience experience,* saith the Apostle *Rom.* 5. where there is long *tribulation* there must be the exercise of much *faith*, much *patience,* much *hope,* and this brings forth much *experience*: Gods greatest rewards of joy and peace in the inward man, of eternal life, glory and happiness, come after much waiting. The Apostle telleth us Heb. 10. 36. *You have need of Patience, that after you have done the will of God you might receive the promise.* The receiving of the promise then is after much patience in *doing the will of God,* and *Rom.* 2. 6, 7. The Apostle tells us, that *God will render unto every man according to his deeds, to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.* But I have been large enough in the confirmation of this observation, I proceed to some application of it.

Use 1. In the first place, *What can strike a greater trembling into the loins of sinners than this?* I shewed you before that the punishment of a resolved impenitent sinner is *certain* and *constant.* As well may he promise himself that he shall not dye, as that he shall not be turned into Hell, and at last hear that dreadful sentence, *depart from me ye cursed into everlasting burnings*: it is constant though he is not sensible of it, yet God is angry with him every day: he every day groweth worse and worse, more blinded and hardned, given up more to *vile affections,* a *reprobate mind,* a conscience as it were *seared with an hot iron*: all that he hath to bless himself in, and for, is *that all things continue with him as formerly,* he yet sees no alteration in his estate, he feeleth nothing *of the wrath* of God. Now this observation spoiles all the sweetness of this. The Heathens observed that the Gods though they had *laneos pedes,* yet they had *ferreas manus*; though they had woolen feet and moved gently, softly, insensibly, yet their hands were of iron; when once they laid hold of wicked men they crushed them to pieces. I am sure it is true of him who is the true and living God. He is slow to conceive a wrath, and beareth with great sinners a long time, but when he enters into judgment with men that abuse his long-suffering and patience, which should lead them to repentance he falleth upon them with a dreadful destruction. O let all sinners that hear this, fear and tremble. There is no such dreadful vengeance as that which God taketh for abused patience. Bless not your selves therefore in your

your present impunity. Hosea 13. 12. *The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up*; his *sin is hid*, saith the Prophet, bound up as in a bundle. There are some other Scriptures much to the same sense, Deut. 32. 33, 34. *Their wine is the poyson of Dragons, and the cruel venome of Asps.* v. 34. *Is not this laid up in store with me? and sealed up amongst my treasures?* Job. 14. 17. *My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sowest up my iniquity.* Lam. 1. 14. *The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed and come up upon my neck.* It is the great folly of sinners, they will say with *Agag*, *the bitterness of death is past*; they sin and go on a long time in sin and God spareth them, and they conclude all is forgot. No saith God it is not, *the iniquity of Ephraim* is not like a loose paper blown away, it is bound up as papers in a bundle, it is not forgot, it is but *hid* with me, I have their sins still in remembrance. *I held my peace* (said God by the Psalmist) *and thou thoughtest me such a one as thy self, but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee.* Some think that the Metaphor in *Hosea* is taken from labourers that labour in husbandry, who bind up in faggots wood that is to be kept some time before it be thrown on to the fire. *Ephraim* thinks his iniquity is forgotten because sin is not presently punished: but said God, his *sin*, that is, (say some but I see no need of it) the punishment of his sin (as indeed it often is taken in Scripture), is but bound up and concealed a little. Others think it a metaphor drawn from men, who bind up mony in bags till the day of payment comes, and thus it agrees with that *Job*; 14. 17. my transgression *is sealed up in a bag*. Besides that the word צרור signifies a purse, or bag, they are *bound up*, they are not pardoned or forgotten: thus the *binding* of sins, *Matth.* 16. 19. signifieth a remaining unpardoned. Some think the metaphor both in *Job* and in *Hosea*, is taken from Lawyers, who carry their informations and enditements *sealed up in a bag*, or bound up in a bundle, that they may not be lost and scattered, but be forthcoming when they will put them into Court. This is a dreadful meditation for an impenitent sinner, that all his sins are *bound up in a bundle*, *sealed up in a bag*, hid, not from God (nothing can be so hid) but *hid with God*. What loads of Faggots hath many a poor creature bound up for him against the great day of burning! what a bundle of *informations* and inditements have some poor creatures bound up for them, against the time that the

Judge

Judge ſhall ſit, and God ſhall come forth to recompence men for their evil deeds! Thou thinkeſt the vanity and wickedneſs of thy youth, thy oaths and blaſphemies, thy lies and ſabbath-profanations, thy drunkenneſs and uncleanneſs is done with: No ſuch matter poor creature! if thou goeſt on in thy impenitency, they are but *ſealed up in a bag*, they are but bound up in a bundle, they are but *treaſured up* (to uſe the Apoſtles expreſſion *Rom.* 2.) againſt the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgement of God, which if it be not in this life (as very often it is) yet will certainly be in the life that is to come. Remember *Ahab*, he was a wicked Prince, God bare with him a long time, he ſhed much blood, was a great perſecutor, ſet up a moſt odious idolatry. God held his peace a great while, and proceeded ſlowly. Two and twenty years he ran his courſe, God ſealed *up all in a bag*; but obſerve with what a dreadful vengeance God comes upon him at laſt. It may be thou canſt ſay, oh! but I have gone on longer, twice two and twenty years: it may be ſo, but what ſaith the Scripture? *if a ſinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet it ſhall not be well with the wicked*, there are but ſo many faggots more bound up, ſo many enditements more againſt thee in Gods bag ſealed up, oh! *let the ſinners in the world be afraid, let trembling ſurprize them all.* The ſlower vengeance cometh, the more dreadfully it cometh. That *upon you may come* (ſaith our Saviour) *all the righteous blood that hath been ſhed from the blood of* Abel *to the blood of* Zacharias. There were great quantities of blood ſhed in *Jeruſalem* betwixt the time of *Abel* and the *blood of Zacharias. Verily* (ſaith our Saviour) *all theſe things ſhall come upon this generation.* O let every impenitent ſinner tremble at the hearing of this, that there is coming upon his ſoul, his body, his family, all the ſin that he hath committed, from the *ſin that clave to him in his Mothers womb, where he was conceived in ſin, and brought forth in iniquity, unto the ſin of the laſt hour that he hath lived in the world.* It was a dreadful reckoning that God made up at laſt with *Jeruſalem* for all their blood, and it will be a dreadful reckoning, Sirs, God will have to make up with every ſinners ſoul, eſpecially with old ſinners.

Uſe 2. *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord* (ſaith the Apoſtle 2 Cor. 5. 11.) *we perſwade men.* And O that my counſel

sel might be acceptable to every hard-hearted resolved impenitent sinner that heareth me this day; that he would break off his sins by true repentance, and secure his soul by getting an *interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed is he* (saith the Psalmist Psal. 32. 1.) *Whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth no iniquity.* That man is accursed whose iniquity is hid with God, laid by, bound up, sealed in a bag, reserved and in close keeping for an after-reckoning. O but that is a blessed man whose sins are *covered by God!* O let no man despise the riches of Gods *goodness, forbearance* and *long-suffering*, but *let him know that the goodness of God leadeth him to repentance*, Rom. 2. 4, 5. If he continueth in the hardness and impenitency of his heart he doth but *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgement of God.* Wrath against thee for thy sins lyeth hid at present, possibly thy Conscience keepeth silence and doth not arrest and disturb thee; the providence of God as to thee keepeth silence, judgement is not executed speedily: but there will be a revelation of divine wrath, either in this life or that which is to come; oh therefore break off your sins by a true repentance. *He that hideth his sins shall not prosper*, Prov. 28. 13. Our sins cannot be hidden from God, they are all in the light of his Countenance; a man then covereth and hideth his sins from God when he doth not confess and bewail them. So long as a man covereth his sins God will not cover them: See that experience of *David* which you have recorded Psal. 32. 2, 3, 4. *When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day-long, for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* vers. 3. *I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

Use 3. In the last place, this observation calleth upon all such as fear the Lord, and walk before him: for *a progress in the wayes of God and a patient waiting for the promise.* The Apostle tells us, Heb. 10. 36. *That we have need of patience, that after we have done the will of God we might receive the promise.* It is our duty as to do well, so not to be weary of *well doing*: it is pressed upon us, Gal. 6 9. *And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.* And again, 2 *Thess.* 3. 13.

but you brethren be not weary in well-doing There is nothing ſo far conduceth to make us faint and weary in our duty, as when we ſee nothing comes of it: we have hopes and promiſes, but no iſſue, no performance; you know *Solomon* tells you, *hope deferred makes the heart ſick*. Now this is a great cordial in ſuch a caſe for us to hear, that when providence moveth ſlowly in bringing rewards to the righteous, it recompenceth our patience at laſt with the riches and liberality of the reward. Indeed here are three or four arguments, which together with this obſervation the Apoſtle hinteth me in the afore-mentioned Text out of the Epiſtle to the *Galathians*, we *ſhall reap*, we *ſhall reap in due ſeaſon*. Our fainting will ſpoil our reaping. The longer it is before we reap, the greater the crop of mercy and bleſſing ſhall be which we ſhall reap.

1. *We ſhall reap*. He that ploweth up the fallow-ground of his heart and ſoweth to the glory of God, and to the good of his own ſoul in righteouſneſs, *he ſhall reap*. The Husbandman that ſowes his Wheat and Barly cannot promiſe himſelf that he ſhall reap; the ſouldier, the plunderer may reap what he hath ſown; a tempeſt, an eaſt-wind, lightning, many other things may hinder his reaping; but he who ſowes righteouſneſs he ſhall reap, nothing ſhall hinder his reaping.

2. *He ſhall reap in due ſeaſon*. It may be he ſhall not reap *in his ſeaſon*, the ſeaſon which he expected; but he ſhall reap *in due ſeaſon*, in ſuch a time as the wiſe God judgeth moſt ſeaſonable; and when he cometh to reap, he ſhall alſo acknowledge the ſeaſonableneſs of it that it is in due ſeaſon; we do not know the fitteſt time for our own mercies, God knowes the fitteſt ſeaſon, we ſhall reap in due ſeaſon.

3. Conſider *that our reaping dependeth upon our not fainting, we ſhall reap* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *if we faint not. If any ſoul draweth back, Gods ſoul will have no pleaſure in him*; he who draweth back, draweth back to his own perdition.

4. and Laſtly, our reward will be *ſo much the greater, by how much it is ſlower*: the rewards of Gods people are ordinarily proportioned to their patient waiting. The Apoſtle *Rom.* 2. 6. having ſpoken of Chriſts coming to *render to every man according to his work*, addeth v. 7. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life.* Yea and certainly degrees of glory will be proportioned to our patience

patience: those that have had least sensible rewards in this life (if there be such a thing as degrees of glory) may expect some of the highest seats, and mansions of glory in that life which is to come. But I shall add no more to this Observation.

SERMON XXX.

Psal. CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I Go on yet in my observations concerning the Actual Providence of God, and that more especially in dealing out distributive justice, recompensing the righteous and the unrighteous. I observed the last time that it is a thing very ordinary with Divine Providence to proceed slowly in these distributions. But by how much slower the punishment of a sinner, or the reward of a good man cometh from the Lord, by so much the greater, both the one and the other is. I now proceed to another Observation.

Observat. 17. *That the Providence of God is very quick in the distribution both of punishments and rewards unto some.*

I shall discourse it first with relation to *punishments*, and then with reference to the *rewards of Providence*. *First*, As to *punishments*. The Apostle *Paul* to *Timothy* 1 *Tim.* 5. 24. hath this expression, *Some mens sins are open before-hand unto judgement, and some mens they follow after: likewise also the good works of some are manifest before-hand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.* I know it is a Text of which Interpreters give various senses, as they understand it of the *judgment of God*, some of them, others of the *judgement of men*; and amongst those who understand it of the later, some understand it of the judgment of the *Magistrate*, others of the *judgment of the Church*; some of both these, some of the judgment of God, and the Ecclesiasti-

cal judgment also. I shall not pretend to give the just sense of it, I shall only allude to it in my discourse. As there are some sins that are open and manifest with respect to the filth and guilt of them; they do not hide their sin, but proclaim it as *Sodom*, they go to the Devil with a trumpet before them, all the world takes notice of them; others sin more secretly and slily and in corners. So God as to some sinners sits in judgement *presently*. Some indeed he is more slow with, they are kept to the great Assize, or for many years, but he is not so slow with all, but either immediately by his own hand, (as in the case of *Ananias* and *Saphira Acts* 5.) or else by the sword of the Magistrate, he cuts them off presently, and giveth them a sudden recompence of their evil deeds. Now it may possibly be asked by some, what are those sins, or in what case is God so quick with sinners; nor may the inquiry be unprofitable for us, for *because judgement is not executed speedily, the heart of man is set in him to do evil.* Gods deferring judgment and giving day for the execution of his wrath, doth much embolden sinners. Let us therefore see in what cases God seldom grants reprieves, but is very quick with sinners, and sendeth them down to Hell reeking with their lusts; this I shall indeavour to shew you in several particulars.

1. *It is hard to name any species of sins, as to which God hath not made, or doth not make some present examples of his vengeance:* So as no sinner can promise himself the reprieve of an hour or day. 1. In the case of *Idolatry* (which is a grievous sin against the first and second commandment) you will find that God proceeded very slowly to judgment for this sin, both in the *Canaanites*, and in the *Israelites*; with the *Canaanites* though they were abominable idolaters, God bare many hundreds of years. With the ten tribes who were idolaters, from the time of *Jeroboam* the son of *Nebat*, who made *Israel to sin*, unto the time when they were finally destroyed, and carried away captives, God bare with them a long time: but you shall find God quicker at another time, *Exod.* 32. The people make *themselves a golden Calf. Moses* comes down from the Mount, and findeth them at their idolatrous worship. *Moses* commandeth the sons of *Levi to put every man his sword by his side, and to go in and out from gate to gate throughout the Camp, and to slay every man his Brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour*; and *v.* 28. it is said that the *children of Levi did according to the word of Moses.*

ses. And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. There God was very quick with idolaters. *Blaspheming, Cursing* and *swearing* is a sin, against the *third commandment.* God as to the punishment of these sins sometimes proceedeth very slowly: but not alwaies. Look into *Levit.* 24. 10. There was the son of an *Israelitish* woman that *blaspheмed the name of the Lord, and cursed,* he was put in prison. God presently giveth order concerning him, v. 14. *That he should be brought forth without the Camp, and stoned to death presently. Sabbath-breaking* (it is a sin against the fourth precept of the Decalogue) God is ordinarily very slow in the punishing of this sin: many a Sabbath-breaker goeth on year after year, and yet is not punished, but God doth not do thus with all. The man that did but gather sticks upon the Sabbath-day was stoned to death by Gods express order and command, *Numb.* 30. 35. *Rebellion* against *Parents, cursing* them and *dishonouring* them is a very great sin, yet God beareth with many wretches a long time that are guilty of it, as we see in the experience of our own lives. A wretched Child is a plague to his Parents many years: but God doth not always bear with sinners in this case. See what a Law God gave the *Israelites* in this case, *Deut.* 21. 18, 19, 20, 21. God ordered *That he should be presently stoned to death, that would not obey the voice of his Father and Mother.* For *Murther,* which is a sin against the sixth Commandment, I shall not inlarge, I shall shew you anon that it is a sin which God rarely suffereth to go long unpunished. The Law of God determined present death, for wilful murder, and the laws of most nations are accordingly; and we daily see the providence of God strangely working to make murtherers examples of his vengeance. *Adultery* is a sin against the seventh Commandment; God sometimes is very patient and proceedeth very slowly, but yet not always; sometimes he strikes a dart through his liver sooner. God established a law in the Jewish polity; *That the Adulterer should be put to death,* Lev. 20. 10. Deut. 22. 22. and you know *Phinehas* presently took a *Javelin,* and ran it through an *Adulterer* and an *Adulteress* and had an ample reward given him from God for it. In the case of theft, God may sometimes be very patient, and doubtless there are many old Thieves in the world, who yet will not escape the vengeance of God at last. But God is not always patient with all these sinners. *Achan was an eminent Thief,* he laid his hands upon Gods

goods,

goods, God had first seized upon the goods of the *Canaanites*, and set them a-part for a sacrifice by fire to himself: *Achan* steals a *wedge of Gold*, and a *Babilonish garment*; God presently revengeth it, first upon all the Army of *Israel*, of which he was a member, then upon himself, and his family, who were stoned to death with stones. For *lying*, and *bearing a false testimony*, witnessing against the life of another as *a criminal*, who was not *a criminal*, they are sins against the ninth Commandment; God is often very patient with these sinners, he doth not presently enter into judgement with every *liar*, every *Informer* and accuser of the servants of God. Some he reserveth *in the chains of an hard and impenitent heart, unto the judgement of the great day:* but yet with some of these sinners God is much quicker. *Ananias* and *Saphira*, as you know, fell down dead with a *lye* in their mouths, and the Accusers of the *three children*, and *Daniel*, were presently destroyed; the first by the heat of that Furnace, which they had made so hot for others; the second by those *Lions*, which they had procured *Daniel* to be thrown unto. But this is enough to have said in justification of my first conclusion, That it is hard to name any species of sinners, but God hath been very quick with some individuals of their company.

2. I find some Divines observing, *That God is ordinarily most severe upon the first violators of his laws:* and this is the reason that is given by some, why the *Sabbath-breaker* was ordered to be *stoned to death*. God had newly revealed his will upon *Mount Sinai*, *Exod.* 31. 14. and repeated it, *Exod.* 35. Now God picks out one of the first open presumptuous violators of it to make him an example; you know this is after the manner of men, who are usually very severe upon the first execution of their laws. *Ananias* and *Saphira* were not the first that had told a lye, but they were the first that we read of, who had told a lye in that business. It was the Will of God that to supply the necessities of his Church at that time, the Christians should have all things for a time common amongst them; and it was not without a divine instinct at least, that so many of them sold their goods, and came and brought the price of them to the Apostles, and laid it at their feet. Now these two seeming professors to save their goods told a lye. God takes a very quick vengeance upon them for it. This Observation is not my own; having therefore named it, I shall leave it to your further observation, how the Providence of God justifies it.

3. There

3. There are, thirdly, *some particular sins which God seldom suffereth to go long unpunished.* I will instance in some,

1. Scandalous and impudent *blasphemy.* Blasphemy is a speaking evil of God, either denying him what is due to him, or attributing that to him, which can by no means agree to his holy Essence; but yet there is a great deal of difference betwixt a bare denial of that to God, or to any person in the Godhead, which is due to them; or attributing that to God, which cannot agree to him from a meer error of Judgment, and mistake and misunderstanding of Scripture, and doing this with scandalous reproachful terms, and a bold and daring defiance of God, for which men can pretend nothing of conscience. God may bear long with blasphemers of the first sort; such are the *Jews*, the *Socinians*, &c. But he is ordinarily very quick in the execution of his vengeance upon the others; the instances of *Pharaoh*, *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Rabshakeh*, and others in Scripture are very obvious, and it were an easie thing to add to them a great deal out of Ecclesiastical story: but if you observe the Providences of God in the days wherein you live, you will see this notion justified every day: it cannot stand with the honour of God long to bear with bold defiers and reproachers of his glorious Majesty.

2. A second sort of sinners, whom *Divine vengeance* useth not to spare or suffer long, are *murtherers.* God hath secured the lives of all men by special laws, *Gen.* 9. 6. *Whoso sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed.* It is one you know of those Ten Commandments which God gave upon *Mount Sinai*, Exod. 20. *Thou shalt do no murther.* God expresly commanded, *That no satisfaction should be taken for the life of the murtherer*, Numb. 35. 31, 32, 33. and tells us, the land where murther is committed, cannot *be purged but by the blood of him that shed it*; and it is a very ordinary observation, that *murther will out*; and we see it in our ordinary experience. There is nothing more remarkable in our observation, than the variety of methods, which the Providence of God useth in the discovery of murther: but I remember in my former discourses, I have spoken something of this.

3. A third sort of sinners, which God in his *Actual Providence*, is ordinarily *very quick with*, are *Persecutors.* Persecution is a violent pursuit of another for the open profession of some necessary truth; whether those that do it, have an humane law in the case or no, maketh little or no difference in the case. You know the *Jews*

 said,

ſaid, *We have a law, and by that law he ought to dye*, yet I hope they perſecuted Chriſt: the Perſecutors of the *three children*, and of the Prophet *Daniel*, had a law, or what in thoſe Countreys, was equivalent, a decree of the Supreme Magiſtrate. In ſhort, there hath been little or no perſecution ever in the world, if humane Laws will alter the caſe. It is a moſt vile and cauſeleſs tranſgreſſion, and as (I have before obſerved to you) though Hiſtory tells us of perſecutions that laſted many years, yet you rarely know God bear long with furious and individual perſecutors, whether they were *Informers*, *Delators*, *Accuſers* or *Judges*; you know how quick God was with the *accuſers of the three children, and of Daniel.* The Providence of God in all times hath juſtified, and ſtill doth ſo eminently juſtifie this Obſervation, that it were to abuſe your patience, to enlarge far upon it; it is very rare that a *Perſecutor* doth not carry ſome mark of *Divine vengeance* upon him to his grave.

4. A fourth ſort of ſinners, with whom the Providence of God is ordinarily *very quick*, is ſuch as *eminently affront*, or do *ſome eminent injury to their ſuperiors*. This is juſtified by all that I ſaid before of the conſpicuouſneſs of Divine Providence, in the protection of thoſe whom he hath ſet to rule over others. I gave you many inſtances. That of *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram* may be added, you know the Earth opened her mouth, and ſwallowed them up; to which may be added that of *Miriam*, who was ſtricken with the plague of leproſie, for her affront to *Moſes*. The Law of God concerning a rebellious Son (which I before enlarged upon) is another inſtance. In ſhort, mark it of whom you will, where ſome eminent affronts are by any offered to the publick government of a nation, eſpecially where the rulers rule well, and do their duty, or in a Church, or (finally) in a private family, God doth very rarely let it go long unrevenged. If any one ſhall ask me the reaſon of this quickneſs of Divine Providence with ſome ſorts of ſinners, theſe particularly which I have mentioned, though I think it a great preſumption for any to undertake to give the reaſon of any Divine Motions; yet I do not think it difficult to ſhew you that they are exceeding reaſonable, and what thoſe imperfect remains of right reaſon, which ſince the fall are left in us, muſt readily ſo acknowledg.

1. *For the vindication of the Divine Majeſty and authority*, as it is natural to every creature, to uſe all its power to preſerve its own

own being; so it is natural to rational beings to preserve their own honour, and to maintain their reputation. The Glory, Honour, Majesty, and Authority of God are things which he will not give unto others, which he will not prostitute to the sordid lusts of worms. Now though every sin doth impeach his Glory, yet not every sin alike: as amongst men, those who are first in the violation of a Law, seem most to confront, and dare, and debase the authority that made it; so those who are the first examples of sinning against a Divine Law, or who teach the world new kinds of sins and disorders, being the boldest affronters of the Divine Authority, usually are made more quick examples of Divine Vengeance: so for the *blasphemer*, he is the most eminent contemner of the Divine Majesty and Glory, he speaketh evil of the supreme good, and spits as it were in the face of the most excellent being, and curseth him that is the fountain of blessing: *God over all blessed for ever.*

2. For the *Demonstration* of Gods *love to mankind, the specialties of his Providence towards man, and the order and government of humane societies, and those whom he hath set up to rule over others*; I have observed to you before, that man is under a specialty of Providence above all other creatures; that amongst men those whom God hath set to rule well, whether in Church or State, are under a further special care; that he hath hedged them about by more particular and special Laws. Now if God by his Providence did not make some eminent examples of his severity and justice, and proceed quickly against them, how should his special Providence be manifested?

3. It is but reasonable, that God should make Persecutors quick examples of his vengeance, if we consider *what a complication of sin there is in the violent prosecution of others, for the profession of the truth.*

1. *There is eminent injury done to God*: he is hindered as to the calves of those lips which the persecutor shuts up. All the immediate honour which God hath in the world, is from the Preaching of the Gospel, from the prayers and praises of his People. Now if God hath any glory from the publication of his Gospel, from the joynt-prayers and praises of his Saints, the persecutor that hindereth these, robbeth God of it, and setteth himself against the God of Heaven and Earth in those things, whereby he hath chosen to be honoured; his business is to interrupt, disturb, and

hinder the making known of Christ to poor souls, to hinder Gods Peoples joynt-praises of him, and prayers to him; he saith to those whom he persecuteth, You shall not serve God, and thus bids an impudent and bold defiance to the Lord of Heaven and Earth.

2. There is in *persecution* an eminent injury done to our *neighbour*. God is not only the avenger of his own glory, but concerning injuries done to men, he hath said, *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it.* Now in all persecutions there must be some great wrong done to our neighbour, either as to his name, or liberty, or estate, or life. And, secondly, it is an *injury* done to him *causelesly*, not by way of retaliation. In truth it is the Image of God which the persecutor flies upon, and it is the *holiness* and *righteousness* of his brother, which he is not able to endure, seeing his own leud and abominable life condemned, by his neighbours more righteous conversation. It is therefore but reasonable, that that God who is jealous of his own glory, and the judg of the innocent person, and who hath said, *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it*, should be severe in his dealings with such sinners, and for his *elect sake shorten the days* of such blood-thirsty men. But this is enough to have spoken to the first part of the Observation.

I told you, secondly, that the Providence of God, is also sometimes very quick in the distribution of rewards; and this you shall especially observe in these cases 1. *In rewards of such as have been eminent sufferers for God.* God doth variously reward such persons, sometimes by *temporal rewards* that are sensible and external: sometimes such as are more *inward* and *spiritual*. Now Gods Providence is often very quick in such distributions, how quickly did God reward *Daniel*, after he came out of the Lions den? and the three Children, after they came out of the fiery Furnace; and *Mordecai* after h had ventured himself so signally in the cause of God, and saw the very gallows set up on which his great adversary thought to have had him hanged? For those rewards that are more inward, and discerned only by those that receive them; how many instances might be given, of strange incomes of joy, and peace, and strength, with which the suffering servants of God have been rewarded so as their inward joy hath drowned their pain, quenched as it were the flame, *&c.*

2. In

2. In the rewards of *such as have done some great and eminent service for God*; bearing some signal testimony against sin, as in the case of *Phinehas* who slew *Zimri* and *Cosbi*, *Num.* 25. 11. or been faithful in some great service, in which others have made some *great defection*, as in the case of *Caleb* and *Joshua*, *Num.* 14. 6. who brought up a true report of the land of *Canaan*, and gave in a true testimony for God against all the rest of the Spies, and when the whole people were in a mutiny.

3. You shall observe, that the Providence of God is ordinarily very quick in rewarding *wicked men for any service they do him*. I might give you many instances of this, that of *Jehu* is an eminent one; God gave him and his posterity a present reward for the good service he had done against the house of *Ahab*; and he gave the *King of Assyria* a present reward for the service, wherewith he had made his Army to serve against *Tyrus*. The like observation might be made in many other cases, and it is no more than we may make a daily observation of: when God rewards those whom he intendeth not to reward eternally, he doth it in this life quickly. And the motions of Divine Providence, in these cases cannot but appear to be highly reasonable, if we do but consider,

1. That this is but *after the manner of men, to such as do signal and eminent services, to give both present and great rewards*, for the encouragement of others: though ordinarily common souldiers sometimes stay for their pay; yet some persons that have signalized their valour, are often Knighted in the field, and some mark of great favour fastned upon them.

2. That *Divine righteousness is thus fulfilled, and not only fulfilled, but so conspicuously, that all the world may take notice*: that God is a *righteous God, fulfilling his word*, and that no man serveth him for nothing. Godliness, (as the Apostle tells us) hath promise not only of that life which is to come, but of this life also. Mar. 10. 29, 30. *There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, for my sake, or the Gospel; but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the life to come, eternal life.* These and such-like promises, respecting this life, or that which is to come; must be justified, and so justified, that the world may take notice, that God is true to them; which cannot

be, unleſs God to ſome ſuch ſervants of his, ſhould diſpenſe out quick and preſent rewards.

3. On the other ſide, it is but reaſonable, that God ſhould preſently reward the ſervices that wicked men do him: *Becauſe there is no portion provided for them in that life which is to come*; neither can they truſt God for the life to come: all they look at is preſent pay, and reward. Thus I have opened to you this Obſervation in the Doctrinal part of it, and ſhewed you the reaſonableneſs of theſe motions of Divine Providence. I come now to the application; which I ſhall ſhortly diſpatch.

Uſe. This Obſervation affords us a new, and potent argument. 1. *To perſwade ſinners from preſumptuous ſinnings.* 2. *To engage men to more eminent ſervices and ſufferings for God.*

1. I ſay, firſt, *To diſſwade ſinners from preſumptuous ſinnings againſt God.* The ſlow motions of Divine Providence, as to the puniſhment of ſinners, as I told you, do much incourage ſinners to go on in their courſes of ſin; the hearts of ſinners are ſet in them to do evil, *becauſe judgement is not executed ſpeedily.* I indeavoured to diſcourage and check this preſumption in my former obſervation; where I confirmed to you, that by how much the more ſlowly vindicative juſtice proceedeth to the puniſhment of ſin, by ſo much ſeverer the puniſhment is when it cometh. This Obſervation addeth further to that check; for, as that which men call ſlackneſs, is but the long ſuffering and patience of God, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould be ſaved by a ſeaſonable repentance. So (as you have now heard at large diſcourſed to you) neither is God thus long-ſuffering, and patient with all: and although God generally be more quick with thoſe ſorts of ſinners, which I have ſpecified to you; yet I deſire you to obſerve what I firſt enlarged upon, that there is hardly any kind or ſort of ſinners, but God at ſome time or other hath picked out ſome or other of them, to make them examples of his ſeverity, Thou maiſt be ſtruck dead, while the lye is in thy mouth. It was the caſe you know of *Ananias* and *Saphira*. Thou maiſt be cut off in the very Act of Adultery, (It was the caſe, you know, of *Zimri* and *Cosbi*). Tremble therefore, and *do not ſin*, God may grant thee many years of patience, he may give thee leave *to treaſure up wrath to thy ſelf againſt the day of wrath*; but thou canſt not promiſe thy ſelf an hours pati-

ence. But above all, fear those sins which God usually is so quick in punishing. *Fear blaspheming God*, or the *King*; we live in a blaspheming age, wherein have been more bold darings of God, than in former times. God hath revenged his glory upon some of them, they have been cut off in their youth, before they have lived out half their dayes. If another generation riseth up, and approveth their sayings, wait but a while, and you will see vengeance overtaking them also. Fear doing any thing against the life of others, who by the law of God ought not to dye. Blood-thirsty men shall not live out half their days, you see Gods vengeance against this sin is very quick.

2. This Observation affords a great encouragement to the service of God, especially to *eminent actings, and sufferings for God.* There is a reward for righteous men, if they go without it to their dying day; yet they shall be recompensed in the generation of the just. Heaven will pay for all; but God doth not always take so long a day to recompence them. Many have a reward in this life, and that which is to come. The Scripture is full of promises, even of the good things of this life, to *godliness* in the general; and to the several parts, and acts of godliness. These promises indeed are not made good to every child of God, in *specie*, but only in equivalent, yea transcendent mercies. But even these promises are made good to many; and they may be thy portion, however thou shalt not miss of the greater things. Particularly, this layeth an engagement upon all that fear God, as God calleth them to it, and giveth them advantage for it to signalize themselves, by eminent actings, or by some eminent sufferings: such you have heard God ordinarily payeth presently; and besides that eternal recompence which they have in glory, they are in more outward, and sensible things, or in more inward influences of grace recompensed in this life. Those that eminently honour God, he will honour; and many of them have a double meas sent them from the Lord.

SER-

SERMON XXXI.

Pſalm CVII. 43.

Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things: even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

I Am proceeding yet in my Obſervations, upon the motions of Divine Providence (that which we call Actual Providence) in its adminiſtration of diſtributive Juſtice, both in the puniſhment of ſinners, and the rewarding of the righteous. Divers Obſervations I have already made, I am come to the,

Obſervat. 18. (Which you may pleaſe to take thus) *That the Providence of God, doth very ordinarily, with the puniſhments of this life, chaſtiſe the paſt, and pardoned ſins of people.*

In the handling of which, I ſhall, 1. *Juſtifie the Obſervation.*

2. I ſhall *ſhew you the reaſonableneſs of this motion of Providence, and reconcile it, both to the juſtice and goodneſs of God.*

3. Laſtly, I ſhall make ſome practical application of it. That it is ſo, I ſhall prove by two famous inſtances: the firſt of *David*, the ſecond *Job*. *David*, you know, had fallen into two grievous ſins, *Adultery* with *Bathſheba*, and the murther of her Husband *Uriah*. God ſendeth the Prophet *Nathan*, 2 *Sam.* 12. to *David* to convince him of his ſin, who doth it by a Parable. *Davids* heart melteth, *v.* 13. and he ſaith unto *Nathan*, *I have ſinned againſt the Lord*. *Nathan* tells him, *the Lord hath alſo put away thy ſin*. The ſin you ſee was both paſt, and pardoned, but mark what follows; v. 14. *Howbeit, becauſe by this deed thou haſt given great occaſion to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme, the Child alſo that is born unto thee ſhall ſurely dye*. He had told him before, v. 10. *That the ſword ſhould not depart from his houſe*: and v. 11. *That he would take his wives before his face, and give them to his neighbour, and he ſhould ly with them in the ſight of the Sun*. All this was afterward juſtified by the Actual Providence

dence of God. The *Child died*, 2 *Sam.* 12. 18. *Amnon* deflo-reth his Sister *Thamar*, and is slain by her Brother *Absolon*: 2 *Sam.* 13. 14, 29. *Absalom*, *Davids* own Son, lieth with his *Fathers Concubines*, *in the sight of all Israel.* 2 *Sam.* 16. 22. *Absolom* is slain in a rebellion against his Father, *&c.* Nay, not only thus, but God punisheth *David* with horrors and terrors in his mind, with diseases in his body, as you may gather from *Psal.* 6. *Psal.* 51. and the rest of those *Psalms*, in which he expresseth his *repentance*. *David* prayeth Psal. 25. 7. *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions*. *Job* complaineth unto God, Job. 7. 2, 3. *As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work; so am I made to possess months of vanity*. I know the words are capable of another sense; as vanity may be understood for affliction and misery, or the frustration of his expectations; but I should rather interpret it by the words of the same *Job* 13. 26, 27, 28. *For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth*, &c. *Moses, and Aaron* sinned against the Lord at the waters of *Meribah*: I do not think that any of you doubt, but that God pardoned their sin; yet it is certain that God punished them, and that for that sin; God himself tells them so, *Deut.* 32. 50, 51. That the Providence of God doth this is evident.

The second thing may seem to have more difficulty in it, *viz. How this is reconcileable, either to the justice, or goodness of God. To his justice, who hath accepted a price, and satisfaction for them at the hand of his Son; concerning whom he hath said, that in him* (as our Mediator) *he was well pleased*. How then can God punish men and women for those sins, for which he hath accepted a price, and satisfaction. *Or how is this reconcileable to the fulness of Gods pardoning grace?* How are those sins pardoned, which God afterward punisheth.

But this Cavil proceedeth upon a double mistake or error.

1. The first *concerning the punishments of sin* upon the Children of God.

2. The second *concerning the satisfaction of Christs death.*

As to the first it supposeth, *that the afflictions and punishments of Gods people, are all for satisfaction*; which if it were so, they were of all men most miserable, as their afflictions do ordinarily more abound, than the afflictions of others. It is true, that the impe-

nitent and irreconciled sinner, hath no reason to look upon any affliction otherwise, than as an arrest of divine vengeance; upon every ague, every feaver, as Gods taking him by the throat, and saying to him, *Pay me now what thou owest*; because they cannot apprehend any such thing, as that Christ hath for them satisfied Divine Justice: but the case is otherwise with a believer. Supposing our afflictions and punishments of this nature, these two things would follow from them.

1. *A Christian should never be able to see to the bottom of his bitter cup*, were satisfaction to be given by us, when could we so much as hope to say? All is finished. We might burn, but when could we hope to come out of the flames? we might be paying, and paying; but when could we think to have paid the uttermost farthing? Satisfaction in our persons must be an endless work, the offended Justice being no less than infinite.

2. *We could never hope by our afflictions to be made gainers in grace.* If it were possible for us to appprehend, that by our suffering we could make full payment to the Justice of God, yet we could have no hope by affliction, to grow more holy: no man groweth richer, by parting with money to pay his debts; none could hope by afflictions, to grow more holy, that his affliction should purge away his dross, or take away his tin, or he by them be made more conformable to the Image of his blessed Saviour, if our afflictions were for satisfaction. But the holy Scripture giveth us quite another notion of afflictions, so far as they concern the People of God; it bottometh them in *Divine Love*, it calleth them *chastenings*, and calleth them *fatherly corrections*, Heb. 12. 6, 7, 8. We are bid *not to despise the chastening of the Almighty*; we are told, *That they are blessed, whom he chasteneth, and teacheth out of his law*; we are told, *that he chasteneth whom he loveth, and scourgeth every child whom he receiveth.* Now it is true, satisfaction is not consistent with the *satisfaction of Christ*; but *corrections* and *fatherly chastisements*, are consistent enough with the price which Christ hath paid, and the satisfaction which he hath given for us; hanging the malefactor, or otherwise putting him to death, is not consistent with pardon; but I hope, whipping him, branding, sending him a while to Bridewel, banishment of him when he deserved death, is consistent enough with it. The Papists indeed fancy that Christ hath only satisfied for the eternal punishment, but still we are bound to satisfie by temporal punishments.

ments. Hence are their penances and purgatory founded, but that is a very uncomfortable notion; and the more we look into it, the more dreadful it will appear. On the other ſide the *Antinomians* are as much almoſt on the other hand, denying the *afflictions* of Gods People, to be *puniſhment of ſins* or *judgments*, when the Scripture ſo calls them. The truth lyes in the middle betwixt theſe two extreams, they are *judgments*, they are *puniſhments of ſin*, but they are *no legal demands of ſatisfaction*, nor giving ſatisfaction. Chriſt hath ſatisfied for the whole guilt of their ſins, for whom he died. All of that nature as to them was *finiſhed upon the croſs*: ſo that the afflictions of the People of God, their puniſhments for ſin, have now both another name and notion, than ſatisfactions.

2. A ſecond miſtake upon which this objection is founded, is, *That Chriſt by his death paid a price into the hands of his fathers juſtice for all temporal puniſhments due to man for ſin, ſo as to excuſe thoſe for whom he died, from them.* Now as to this, whatſoever we may fancy,

1. It is manifeſt, *that our Lord Jeſus never did purchaſe for his people any ſuch thing as a freedom from temporal death, and the ſmart of bodily afflictions.* He hath taken away *the ſting of death*, but not *death*; he hath delivered us from the curſe, but not from the croſs. This is all which the Scripture ſaith, *Gal.* 3. 13. *He hath redeemed us from the curſe, by being made a curſe for us*: himſelf hath told us, *That if any one will be his diſciple, he muſt deny himſelf, and take up the croſs and follow him*: And we are told by the Apoſtle, *That all who will live godlily in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution.* And accordingly the ſervants of God have experienced it, even *Paul* himſelf was in deaths often, and had his thorn in the fleſh.

2. Nor was it any branch of that Covenant of *Redemption and Grace, in which Chriſt was a party with, or a ſurety to the eternal father.* I put in thoſe two terms *Redemption* and *Grace*. I know ſome make two Covenants; the one they call *the Covenant of Redemption*, the other the *Covenant of Grace*, and that there are very different notions of the *Covenant of Grace*. For my own part, I ſee no need of aſſerting more than one Covenant, and that eternal, *Iſa.* 42. 6. This I take to be a paction from eternity, made betwixt the *Father*, the *eternal Father*, on the one part; and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt on the other, wherein Chriſt Covenanted with his Father, *that he would do his whole will for the redemption of*

his chosen ones, Psal. 40. 7. Heb. 10. 7. and that we by grace derived from him, *should do what the father requires of us in order to our salvation*, in respect of which he is said to be made *the surety of a better Covenant*, Heb. 7. 22. The Father mutually Covenanted with his Son, that he would be well-pleased in him, that he would give him the souls for whom he should dye, that he might give them eternal life, and all that grace and good which should be advantageous for them; but neither did Christ ask of his Father, neither did his Father promise him on their behalf an immunity from temporal punishments, afflictions, or chastisements for sin. We cannot understand the terms of the Covenant of Grace, but from the *Exhibition* of it in Scripture, which was very various, sometimes more clearly, sometimes more darkly, to *Adam*, *Noah*, *Abraham*, *David*, &c. One of the fairest copies of it, I think is that to *David*, which we have, *Psal.* 89. from the 20, to the 35. *v.* Vers. 28. he tells him, *That he will keep his mercy with him for evermore, and his covenant should stand fast with him:* but yet he reserveth himself a liberty to punish him and his seed for sins: *vers.* 30. *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes: nevertheless my loving-kindness I will not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: my Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.* So that notwithstanding the Covenant of Grace for eternal life, and pardon of sin, and all grace in order to the obtaining of this life, and notwithstanding the blood of Christ, which was the *blood of this Covenant*; God hath yet a liberty to visit the *transgressions of his people*, even their past, as well as renewing transgressions with rods, *and their iniquity with stripes:* yet he doth not break his Covenant, nor alter any thing that is gone out of his lips.

3. Nor is it reasonable that any should fancy, that God by the establishment of the Covenant of Grace, or by acceptance of the satisfaction of his Son, as the blood of this Covenant to make an atonement and reconciliation for iniquity, should have barred himself of his liberty to punish the sins of his people: or that any who hath *accepted this Covenant upon the exhibition of it in the Gospel, should be excused from such chastisements*; *if we consider*,

1. *That*

1. *That some of these chastenings are made the matters of a promise*, Mark 10. 30. Persecutions are reckoned amongst Christs rewards in this life, *Heb.* 12. 6, 7, 8. *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every child whom he receiveth*, &c. Thence the ancients were wont to call Martyrdom a Crown; and *Luther* was wont to complain, *That God would not honour him to wear that Crown.* Saint *Paul* prayeth to be *made conformable to the death of Christ*; if the Saints did not fight, how could they triumph? how should they conquer? yea be more than conquerers?

2. *That afflictions are the path-way to death, and death the door into eternal life.* Every affliction is a blow at the root of our tree, preparing it for its fall; and if we did not dye, how should we live in Heaven? We must all dye, or be changed; or our corruptible could never put on incorruption, nor our mortal put on immortality. It is reported of *Zaleucus*, a lawgiver amongst the *Indians*, that he should say, If God had not appointed that all should dye, it had been reasonable for men to have made a law in the case: and we read of some *Indians*, who being asked why they worshipped the Sun, gave this reason, *Because it was the Author of death.* Give me leave to say, That *death* is so necessary, and afflictions are so wholesom for Christians, that they deserve rather to be reckoned amongst those things which Christ hath purchased for them, than such things as he hath purchased them a liberty from.

1. *All sorts of afflictions of this life, are means of grace*; not so much means of begetting, as reviving, and increasing grace: for as the fire *softneth the wax, and hardneth the clay*; so I have usually observed, *That afflictions make the wicked man worse, but godly men better*; they revive repentance, they are times when usually men call sin to remembrance, they draw out the exercises of faith, and both work and exercise patience. *Tribulation* (saith the Apostle) *worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. David, before that he was afflicted, went astray*, after he learned to keep Gods Statutes. God while he punisheth his people for their sins, doth not barely chasten them, but he also teacheth them out of his Law.

2. They (secondly) *prepare the Saints for glory*; and this not only as they restrain sin, and tend to perfect grace; but as it pleaseth God of his grace to reward the sufferings of his people,

and the faith and patience of his people shewed in and under their sufferings with the greater glory. Thus the Apostle saith, 2 *Cor.* 4. 17. *That our light and momentany afflictions work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* And thus much may serve to have cleared this Objection, that I may haften to the practical Application of this Observation. This motion of Divine Providence in punishing with temporal punishments, past, and pardoned sins, even in the best of Gods People, appears exceeding reasonable.

1. *In regard of the Justice of God.* The Justice of God having taken a satisfaction in the blood of his Son, and been paid a price for the sins of his people, will not allow him to punish them with an eternal punishment; yet it is reasonable they should not go altogether unpunished, that the world may see that he is a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity in any. I remember what God said by the Prophet *Jeremiah* to the *Jews*, *Jer.* 30. 11. *I will not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.* You have the same again, *Jer.* 46. 28.

2. It is reasonable (secondly) *in order to the eternal salvation of their souls*, 1 Cor. 11. 32. *When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.* It is *P. Martyrs* note upon that Text, that the Apostle in that passage particularly respecteth such as fear God; for the case is otherwise with wicked men, whose punishment but begun in this life, shall be perfected in the world that is to come. But I have spoken enough to the Doctrinal part of this Observation. Let me now come to some practical Observation, shewing you what use we may and ought to make of it.

Use 1. This in the first place serves to *justifie God in those sore afflictions which we often see him bringing upon his own people.* When we look upon the holiness of a *Job*, and see him a man *fearing God, and eschewing evil*, and see such a person under sharp tryals of affliction, we are ready to startle at it, and cannot understand Divine Justice in it. But God is many ways to be justified. 1. *Who liveth and sinneth not enough against God*, to justifie the severest dispensations under which God exerciseth him?

2. *If he did not, yet it is an ordinary thing, and very righteous for God, to write bitter things against his people for the sins of their youth,*

youth, though paſt and pardoned. Now who hath ſo paſſed his youth, that he hath not been guilty of ſin enough to juſtifie God in his puniſhments, yea and to make him acknowledg that he hath been puniſhed ſeven times leſs than he hath deſerved. And if neither of theſe could be ſeen as a meritorious cauſe, yet God hath a liberty by afflictions, to *try the faith and patience of his people*, (but that is not the ſubject of my preſent diſcourſe). I remember when they asked our Saviour concerning him that was born blind, whether it were for *his own ſin*, or *for his parents*: Our Saviour replys, for neither, but that the glory of God might appear. So I doubt not but Gods end in afflicting his people, is neither at all times the puniſhment of the perſons late ſins, nor former ſins, but that both the grace and glory of God might appear in ſtrengthning, ſupporting, and upholding of his poor creatures, and that he might be glorified by them in the fires, by the exerciſe of their faith and patience, *&c.*

Uſe 2. This ſpeaketh loud to all, eſpecially to young men, *to take heed of preſumptuous ſinnings againſt God. Preſumption of mercy* is that which much enticeth out the luſts of our hearts: there are ſome that will fancy God an Idol of mercy, and will ſay, Let them do what they liſt, yet it ſhall be well with them; they will not believe any ſuch thing as Hell, or a Revelation of the wrath of God againſt ſinners. God did not make them to damn them, *&c.* God of old foreſaw there would be a generation, that when *they heard the words of his curſe, would bleſs themſelves in their hearts, ſaying, They ſhould have peace, although they walked after the imaginations of their own hearts, adding drunkenneſs to thirſt*, Deut. 29. 19. Obſerve, *v.* 20. what God ſaith as to ſuch, *The Lord will not ſpare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealouſie ſhall ſmoke againſt that man, and all the curſes that are written in this book ſhall lye upon him, and the Lord ſhall blot out his name from under heaven*, &c. But bleſſed be God there are not many of theſe in the age wherein we live, not many but will acknowledg an Heaven and an Hell, and profeſs to believe, that there is a reward for the righteous, and for the unrighteous, for the Saint, and for the ſinner. So that what incourageth the moſt of men in ſinful courſes, is not any hope of a total and final impunity, but a preſumption of pardon, and obtaining mercy with God before they dye. They are taught by

ſome wild teachers, that it is in the power of man to repent, to believe, to turn to God when he pleaſeth; and this imboldneth them to out-ſtare all the terrors of the Lord, and to put off all the tenders of the Goſpel, to indulge their luſts, and to ſay, It is not yet time to turn unto God: if they obtain pardon at laſt, they ſhall be well enough; if they turn to God (and they are told they can do it when they pleaſe), it is but taking up a reſolution in their old age, when they have had the fill of their luſts in their youth. Now if this Doctrine had any truth in it, it would quite deſtroy an old argument we had to preſs men to a ſpeedy repentance; becauſe that God, who always giveth pardon to them who truly repent, *will not always give unto ſinners an heart to repent.* No need of that, ſay our new Teachers, man hath a *freedom in his own will*, he may repent whenſoever he can but get himſelf of the mind; he labours under no more than a *moral impotency*, his luſts are ſo ſtrong, that he cannot obtain leave of himſelf; that is all. But friend, admit this were true, that thou hadſt repentance in thy own hand, and that thou ſhouldeſt upon thy repentance obtain pardon of thy ſins from God; yet God may as to the puniſhments of this life make thee go mourning to thy grave for the ſins of thy youth: he may plague thee in thy own perſon, and plague thee in thy poſterity; God had pardoned *Davids* ſin, *Nathan* told him, *The Lord had put away his iniquity, yet the child dyed, the ſword never departed from his houſe.* *Abſolom* requited him by going into his Concubines in the ſight of the Sun; he was weary with his groaning, all the night long, he made his bed to ſwim, and watered his couch with his tears, his eyes were conſumed with grief, *Pſal.* 6. *His bones waxed old through his roaring all the day-long: Gods hand was heavy upon him night and day, ſo as his moiſture was turned into the drought of ſummer*, Pſal. 32. Who would not fear ſuch kind of diſpenſations? Alas! there is no ſuch thing as mans having a power in himſelf to repent and turn to God. *Can the Blackamore change his skin, or the Leopard his ſpots?* Everywhit as ſoon as he who is accuſtomed to do evil, can do well; but admit you could, I ſay it is a thouſand to one but God in the puniſhments of this life will viſit your youth-ſins upon you: young men that are wiſe, will take heed of wounds and ſtrains in their youth, or *ſurfeits*, which though they feel little of in the heat of their youth, they will be ſure enough to feel in their bones when old age overtaketh

them; and certainly, if ſenſual ſinners would give but their reaſon leave to guide them, it would guide them alſo to take heed of thoſe ſins in their youth; for which they may ſo ſeverely ſmart, by wounds, and terrors of Conſcience; by doubts, and horrors, and fears; by diſeaſes, and other kind of puniſhments: there is a great deal of difference, betwixt being ſaved ſmoothly, and a being ſaved but *through fire*. O let me plead with you, who have little elſe to ſay, for the cares and pains of your youth, but that by it you are but providing quiet and reſt for your ſelves when you come to be old; that you would admit the force of that Argument alſo to perſwade you to *remember your Creator in the days of your youth*; and to take heed of the ſins of youth, which God often ſo ſeverely puniſheth upon gray-hairs, yea and that to his own people, whoſe iniquities yet he hath pardoned, ſo as they ſhall not eternally condemn him.

Uſe. 3. But (that I may ſhut up this diſcourſe) what you have heard upon this Obſervation, may *offer the beſt of us*, ſome matter, which poſſibly, we have not thought of; both of *daily humiliation, and particular humiliation, when the rod of God is upon us.* I ſay,

1. *Of daily repentance, and humiliation.* We are ready to ſpeak after the language of *Agag* (whom *Saul* had ſpared upon the ſlaughter of the *Amalekites*) *ſurely the bitterneſs of death is paſt.* If we find that God hath changed our hearts, that we are not what we were; we are very prone to think, that all the follies, and vanities of our youth are forgotten. But let us not miſtake, God ſealeth up the ſins of impenitent ſinners in a bag, for to be brought forth to their eternal ruine, in the day of the revelation of Gods wrath: he ſealeth up the ſins of his redeemed ones in a bag, to chaſten them oft-times in this life, with the rods and ſtripes of men. God *wrought bitter things againſt* Job, *for the ſins of his youth*: and *David* ſaw reaſon to pray, that the Lord would not *remember the ſins of his youth againſt him.* We ſtand therefore deeply concerned, with bitterneſs, to remember what God hath not ſo forgotten, but he may deeply chaſtiſe us for. O, then my Brethren, let us all look back upon our youth, and mourn over that firſt, and wanton time! And,

2. When the hand of God is upon us; and it may be we cannot find wherefore he contendeth us; then let us remember for-

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mer sins, and humble our souls before the Lord for them; and glorifie God in the fires, by acknowledging the righteousness of God in the punishment of the sins of our former years. But possibly some will say to me, *What is to be done in this case?* is there no way to prevent this after-reckoning with us?

Truly I cannot promise you there is, for as a *people may be grown* in sin to such an height, that there is no speaking to God for them; so it is possible, that our former sins may have so provoked God, as notwithstanding our repentance and conversion, God may be resolved, that we shall smart in the flesh, though our souls be saved in the day of Christ; but if there be any hope for such a mercy, it is certainly to be obtained.

1. By *frequent humiliations for past sins*, much fasting and prayer: thus *Josiah* obtained mercy, as to his person, when the sins of his predecessors, were coming like a storm upon him. *David* knew that if any thing would do, this was the way; and therefore while the *child was sick, he humbled himself, and would eat no bread.*

2. *By shewing your selves eminent in* the exercise of those *vertues* and *graces*, which *are most opposed to your former sins*. This was *Daniels* counsel to the King; he had sinned by *unrighteousness*, cruelty and *injustice*; oppressing his subjects, griping the poor, *&c.* *Daniel* adviseth him, to *break off his sins by righteousness*, and his iniquities, *by shewing mercy to the poor, if it might be a lengthning out of his tranquillity*, Dan. 4. 27. He could not assure him this would be a *lengthning out of his tranquillity*; but if it were a thing to be done, this was the way to obtain it. *Paul* had eminently sinned, by *blaspheming*, persecuting the Lord Christ in his members: he preacheth up Christ, and laboureth in the work of the Gospel more than all the rest of the Apostles.

3. *Walk humbly* (in the third place) *with thy God*; do not be too censorious, too rash in thy judgement; God resisteth the proud: thou wert once as others are; it is *by Grace* thou art otherwise. Now it cannot be pleasing, but highly provocative to God; to see a great sinner, whom he hath pardoned, and received to mercy, triumphing over, judging, censuring them; and doubtless doth often provoke God to call their former sins to remembrance, that they may learn to pity others. It is seldom that God by smart judgements makes them sensible of their errors, who have a daily sense of them; and in the sense of them, walk softly

ſoftly all the days of their lives. *If we would judg our ſelves* (ſaith the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 11. 31.) *we ſhould not be judged.*

4. Be much in ſecret prayer to God, begging of him, *That if it be poſſible, thoſe bitter cups might paſs from thee*; but remember to add what our Saviour addeth; *yet not my will, but thy will be done.* For theſe puniſhments are not in themſelves evil, and therefore not abſolutely to be deprecated; but with ſubmiſſion to the will, and wiſdom of God.

SERMON XXXII.

Pſalm CVII. 43.

Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things: even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.

I Am ſtill detained in a Diſcourſe, concerning the *obſervable things* of *Divine Providence*, *Actual Providence*; and more particularly, I am recommending to your obſervation, ſome things relating to its motions in the diſtributions of *Rewards*, and *Puniſhments.* I ſhall offer one thing more of this nature.

Obſervat. 19. *That it is a very ordinary motion of Divine Providence*, both to *reward* and *puniſh Relations* in *their Correlations.*

To viſit the iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children; of the Magiſtrates upon the people, *&c.* And ſo on the contrary, to *reward* the good and righteous actions of Parents unto their poſterity, *&c.* In the proſecution of this, keeping my method,

1. I ſhall *juſtifie the obſervation, by ſeveral inſtances.*

2. I ſhall ſhew you the *Reaſonableneſs* of this *motion of Providence*, and clear it from all φαινόμενα, or appearances of injuſtice, or contrariety to what God hath ſpoken in his word: with reference to the diſtribution of puniſhments.

3. Laſtly, I ſhall *make ſome practical Application.*

That the thing is true, appeareth from so plentiful a testimony of Scripture-instances; as hardly any thing is more clear, and that both as to *Rewards* and *Punishments*. I will begin with the first, but shall be shorter in that Discourse; because the difficulty lieth more as to the second thing, *viz.* the distribution of punishments.

Now for *Rewards*, besides many particular instances, we have two that are more general; those of *Abraham*, the Father of the faithful, and *David*, the man according to Gods own heart. They were both great, and common Fathers. *Abraham* was the Father of the Jewish Nation: The father of *many Nations*, and the *father of the faithful*. I shall only consider him in the first capacity. *David* was the father of the Kings of *Judah* (*Sauls* family, you know, was extinguished presently): Now how frequently in Scripture, do you find God declaring his goodness, and mercy to the Jewish Nation, for his servant *Abrahams sake*; or for the sake of *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*; or for his servant *Davids* sake! *And God heard their groaning, and God remembred his Covenant, with Abraham, and with Isaac, and with Jacob*, Exod. 2. 24. Lev. 26. 42. *Then will I remember my Covenant with Jacob, and also my Covenant with Isaac; and also my Covenant with Abraham will I remember, and I will remember the Land.* Hence it was that the Jews gloried so much, that *They had Abraham to their Father*: and the faithful amongst them ordinarily used it, as an argument to plead in prayer with God for them. It is plain concerning *David*, from a multitude of Scriptures, 1 *Kings* 11. 11. God threatning to *rend away the Kingdom of Solomon*, tells him, that for *David his servants sake, he will not do it in his days*; and v. 12. *For David his servants sake, he would give one tribe to his Son.* So again, *v.* 32, 34. and 2 Kings 8. 19. *Yet the Lord* would not destroy *Judah* for *Davids* sake. 2 Kings 19. 34. *I will defend this City, save it for my own sake, and for my servant Davids sake*; hence the *Psalmist* prayeth, Psal. 132. 10. *For thy servant Davids sake, turn not away the face of thine Anointed*, and so in many other texts of Scripture. The case as to punishments, hath yet a far more plentiful evidence from holy Writ, *Exod.* 17. 8, 9. *Amalek* smote *Israel* when they came out of *Egypt*. God revengeth this sin upon their children, and posterity. More than 350 years after, God saith to *Saul*, 1 *Sam.* 15. 2, 3. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, *I*

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remember that which Amalek did, how he laid wait for them in the way, when he came out of Egypt. Now go ſmite Amalek, and utterly deſtroy all that they have; and ſpare them not, but ſlay both man, and woman, and infant, and ſuckling; both Ox and Sheep, and Camel, and Aſs. God in the ſecond Commandment ſaith, that he is a *jealous God, viſiting the iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third, and fourth generation*; and conformable unto this, is the whole revelation of the will of God in Scripture, and the diſpenſation of Actual Providence. 1 *King.* 11. 11. God threatneth to rend the Kingdom away from *Solomon. Foraſmuch as this is done of thee, and thou haſt not kept my ſtatutes, which I have commanded thee.* v. 12. *Notwithſtanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy Fathers ſake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy Son*; he accordingly did, 1 *King.* 12. 16. *Jeroboam*, you know, had the part God rent from the houſe of *David.* He ſetteth up idolatry. God threatneth, 1 *King.* 14. 9. that becauſe of this, he would deſtroy *Jeroboams* houſe; and cut off from him, *him that piſſed againſt the wall, and would take away the remnant of the houſe of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung till it be gone.* Now obſerve, how the Actual Providence of God fulfils this, 1 *King.* 15. 25. *Nadab*, *Jeroboams* ſon ſucceedeth; he reigneth but two years; *v.* 27. *Baaſh* conſpireth *againſt him, ſmiteth him, and ſlayeth him*; v. 29. *He ſwote all the houſe of Jeroboam*; he left not to *Jeroboam* any that breathed until he had deſtroyed him. v. 30. *Becauſe of the ſins of Jeroboam which he ſinned, and which he made Iſrael to ſin, by his Provocation, wherewith he provoked the Lord God of Iſrael to anger.* The phraſe is not excluſive of *Nadabs* ſins; but it plainly proveth, that in *Nadab*, and the reſt of his families puniſhment, there was a ſpecial conſideration of *Jeroboams ſins*: *Baaſha* doth as wickedly as *Jeroboam.* God ſends *Jehu* the Prophet, who threatneth him, that the Lord would take away his poſterity, *and the poſterity of his houſe; and make his houſe, like the houſe of Jeroboam, the ſon of Nebat*, 1 *Kings* 16. 1, 2, 3. He reigned 24 years. *Elah* his ſon ſucceeds him, and reigneth two years, as bad a man as his Father, 1 *Kings* 16. 8, 9, 10. *Zimri*, one of his Captains ſlayeth him, being drunk. *v.* 11. the ſame *Zimri*, ſlayeth *all the houſe of Baaſha; he left him not one who piſſed againſt the wall, neither of his kinſfolks, nor friends.* And this *v.* 13. was for all the *ſins of Baaſha. Omri* ſets up againſt *Zimri*,

and prevaileth; he reigneth 12 years: *Ahab* was his son, who reigned 22 years. He was a most vile man, 1 *Kings* 21. 25. *There was none like unto Ahab*; which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord. God in the same Chapter, v. 21. threatned him, because *he had sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord, that he would bring evil upon him, and take away his posterity; and would cut off from Ahab, him that pissed against the wall, and him that was shut up, and left in Israel; and would make his house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha.* In the next Chapter you shall read that *Ahab* was killed in the battle at *Ramoth Gilead*. *Ahaziah succeedeth him*, 1 *Kings* 22. 40. *Ahaziah* dieth an untimely death, occasioned by a fall from a window; 2 *Kings* 1. and *Jehoram* his son succeedeth: *v.* 17. he was slain by *Jehu*, 2 *Kings* 9. ch. 10. *Seventy sons* more of his were slain by the men of *Samaria*, at the command of *Jehu*. and *v.* 17. When he came to *Samaria*, he slew all that remained to *Ahab* in *Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the Lord, which he spake to Elijah. Jehu* succeedeth in the Kingdom, he slew the Priests, and worshippers of *Baal*; and turned the house of *Baal* into a *draught-house*, 2 *Kings* 10. 25, 26, 27, 28. For this God rewardeth both him and his posterity, with a Crown and a Throne, 2 *Kings* 10. 30. But he yet kept up the idolatry of *Jeroboam*, 2 *Kings* 10. 29. for this, God not only punished him, in his life time, 2 *Kings* 10. 32, 33. *But threatens to avenge the blood of Jesreel upon the house of Jehu. Hosea* 1. 4. which came to pass an hundred years after, in the fourth Generation. *Jehoahaz Jehu's* son reigned 17 years. *Joash* his son reigned 16 years. *Jeroboam* his son reigned 41 years, which added to 28 years *Jehu* reigned, makes a 102 years. Now you know, the service *Jehu* did, was in the beginning of his reign. Thus you see this was Gods constant course of Providence, with the several families of the Kings of *Israel*. For the sin of *Eli*, 1 *Sam.* 2. 27. *God threatneth him, that because he had honoured his sons above God.* v. 29. *He would cut off his arm, and the arm of his fathers house; that there should not be an old man in his house.* v. 33. *And all the increase of his house should die in the flower of their age.* Christ bids those that mourned for him, *to weep for themselves, and their children.* In short, the proof of this is very full from Scripture. And we shall find this done, not only in *natural Relates* and *Correlates*; Such are Fathers

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and Children, of which I have given you plentiful instances; but in such as are *moral Relations.* Sometimes we shall *find the people punished* for the *Rulers sin.* Thus it was in the case of *David, he numbred the people*, the people were plagued for it. So in the case of *Jeroboam*, and *Baasha*, and *Ahab*; they set up their idolatry; the people were destroyed, *Hosea* 5. 11. *Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgement, because he willingly walked after the Commandment*, (a Text worth the studying by many Divines in our age). The famine in *Davids* time, 2 *Sam.* 21. 1. came for *Saul*, and his bloody house; and ten of his sons must be haned to attone God. Again, you shall find it done, when the *original guilt was in the people*: this was the case of the *Israelites*, when they made *the Golden-calf*, *Exod.* 32. 22. And when they murmured, at the report brought up by the Spies, *Num.* 14. 33. The judgement extended to near 40 years. This is a tremendous motion of Providence, it may not therefore be out of my way to enquire,

1. *What sins those are, which God doth ordinarily thus revenge on Correlates?*

2. *How far this Vengeance doth extend?*

3. *How this is reconcileable to the justice and goodness of God, and the revelation of his will?*

1. As to the first, it is hard to say, *what sins God may not thus revenge. Eli* was thus (as you have heard) punished in his posterity, for not duly *punishing his Sons*; *David* for *numbring the people*: but the more eminent sins, which you read of in Scripture, thus punished, are;

1. *Corruption in the worship of God*, and especially *Idolatry*, (which is the highest sin in that kind) This is verified in the instance of the punishment, for the *Calf* made by *Aaron* at the importunity of the people, *Exod.* 32. and in all the cases of the *Kings of Israel*, before-mentioned. Princes were punished for it, not only personally, but in their families; and the people too, *for willingly walking after the commandment.* The worship of God is a very tender thing; and God more severely punisheth no sin, than he doth corruptions in that.

2. *Blood, Cruelty* and *Oppression*, and especially the *blood of righteous men.* God *Numb.* 35. commands that no *satisfaction should be taken for the life of the murderer*; he tells us there, *blood polluteth a land, and so, as that it cannot be cleansed, but by the blood of*

of him that shed it. This was the case of *Saul*, he had shed the blood of the *Gibeonites*; for this, vengeance came in a famine upon all *Israel*, and particularly upon his family. This was the case of *Ahab* also; he had shed the blood of *Naboth*, and of the Lords Prophets. This was the case of the Jews; *That* (saith our Saviour) *upon you may come all the righteous blood shed, from the blood of Abel, to the blood of Zechariah*; and the blood of Christ by them shed, lieth upon that whole people unto this day.

But secondly, *How far may this Vengeance extend?*

1. I answer, *Not to the inward man. The spiritual, or eternal punishment* of any man consisteth of two Essential parts, *the soul and the body*; both these are capable of punishment, both in this life, and that which is to come: hence ariseth the distinction of punishment, into that which is *Corporal*, and that which is *Spiritual*; that which is *Temporal*, and that which is *Eternal*. Now I do not think, that God punisheth the souls of succeeding generations, not going on in the same, or equal sins, for the sins of a preceeding generation; or the souls of correlates, for the sins of their Relations. In this sense I take that Text, Ezech. 18.4. *The soul that sinneth shall dye: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father: nor the father the iniquity of the child.* As also that Jer. 31.29. *They shall not use this Proverb, The Fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the childrens teeth are set on edge: but every one shall dye for his own sin*: but whether that be the strict sense of those Texts or no, I will not dispute: this seemeth to me a sufficient reason for this determination. *Because the soul of the child is no part of the parent.* All souls are Gods, and derive immediately from him. One thing which is said by Divines, in maintenance of the justice of God, in this dispensation, is this, *That children are the goods of their parents, and parts of them, flesh of their flesh*; but it cannot be said so of their *souls*. Hence it followeth, that none, for the sins of their Parents, or Correlates, is given up to *hardness of heart, reprobacy of mind, or vile affections*; nor to any other spiritual wickedness, nor shall any perish eternally for the sins of others.

2. *For punishments of this life, they may extend to the third and fourth generation, even upon those, who do not tread in the steps of their fore fathers, nor approve their sayings.* You know the words of the second Commandment ——*visiting the iniquity of the Fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation, of*

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those that hate me. There are that think, that those later words are a limitation upon the former; and that God only threatens vengeance to the *third and fourth generations*, in case those two generations go on to hate God; and thus the *Caldee Paraphrast* glosseth; but this will not agree with the *Hebrew*. I desire you to observe,

1. *Those that hate him* (in that Commandment) are opposed *to them that love him* in the same Commandment; so that if the threatning be to be limited, only to those children who persist in the hatred of God, the promise also must be expounded only of those thousands that *love God*: and it would rather have been, that he would shew mercy to the third and fourth *generation, of those that love God.*

2. Again, *What had there been extraordinary in the commination?* God will most certainly punish them that hate him, for their personal hatred of him; certainly God brings it as a further argument to deter men from sin, that he would not only revenge their sins upon them, but upon their posterity.

3. *This vengeance is not so necessary or certain, but that by the repentance, and humiliation of a present generation, though it will at last most certainly come, it may be deferred.* The threatning against *Ahab* and his posterity was, 1 *Kings* 21. 22, 23. *Ahab* was a little smitten upon it; God promiseth to defer it, but tells him it should come in his sons days. *v.* 29. *Ahaziah* succeedeth him, and dyed by a fall; *Jehoram*, or *Joram* succeedeth him: then it began to work, *Jehu* slayeth him, and also all the family of *Ahab*. God threatned *Jeroboam*; but because there was good found in his young son *Abijam*, it fell not on him: 1 *Kings* 14. 7, 8, 9, 16. but in his Grand-childs time it came. *Hezekiah* was thus threatned for shewing the hid treasures to the *King of Babylons* servants. 2 *Kings* 20. 17. *Josiah* was his Grand-child, the third generation from *Hezekiah*; *he humbled himself*, and God yet deferred it. Thus we find vengeance of this nature coming on *Jeroboam*, in the second generation; upon *Ahab*, in the third; upon *Hezekiah*, in the fifth or sixth generation. We find this vengeance taken off from *Abijam, by some good thing found in him*, put off in *Ahabs* time by his (though hypocritical) humiliation, by *Josiahs real humiliation.*

4. Lastly, *When a generation goes on, and continues in their Fathers sins, we find vengeance following them to many generations.*

In

In that case (saith God) *I will not keep silence, but will recompence your iniquities, and the iniquities of your Fathers together, who have burnt incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills; therefore will I measure their former work into their bosome, Isaiah* 65. 6, 7. This was the case of the Jews, *Matth.* 23. 35. They continued *shedding the blood of Prophets*, and *righteous men*, and added to it the blood of *Christ*; and they continued still in their blasphemies against Christ. They are not in a state indeed, to execute their malice against Christ, and his Gospel; but their hatred and blasphemy continueth; and the vengeance of God to this day continueth upon them, and God is this day visiting upon them *their iniquities, and the iniquities of their Fathers together*. And thus much may serve to have spoken concerning the extent of this vengeance. I have but one thing more to do, before I come to the practical application of this observation, that is, to reconcile this motion of Divine Providence, to the justice and goodness of God, and the revelation of his will in *Ezech.* 18. 4. and other Texts. This dispensation, at first view, seemeth not to comport with the justice of God, which must give every man his due, and recompence to every one, according to his work. Now the work of the Father, is not the *work of the Child*; how then cometh it to be recompensed to the Child? much less doth it seem to comport with the *goodness of God*, to visit the iniquity of the Father upon the child; and then it seemeth to cross what God hath said, *Ezech.* 18. 4. *The soul that sinneth shall dye*; and again, *Jer.* 31. 29, 30. *Every one shall dye for his own iniquity; every man that eateth the sowre grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.* But I beseech you observe,

1. *How ready we are to quarrel with God, for what is done every day with men, and no man accuseth it of injustice*; to take away the estates of Children, for the treasons of Parents, for the debts of Parents, *&c.* How ordinarily in war do innocent Children suffer for their Parents? yet as to man the law of God is plain, Deut. 24. 16. *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the parents; every man shall be put to death for his own sin:* and reason holds much stronger for Gods punishing, even with death, the sin of the parent upon the child. For,

1. *God can compensate the loss of a temporal life to the child, with an eternal life:* this man cannot do. This was *Augustines* reason.

2. *God*

2. *God seeth guilt enough in children, to justifie his vengeance.* To man they are innocent: yet according to that barbarous custom in war, nothing is more ordinary, than to take away the lives of children, for the fathers faults; yet the world doth not much clamour at this.

2. The justice of God is sufficiently cleared in this, *That God never punisheth any for the sin of their correlate, in whom there is not personal guilt enough, to justifie God in that proceeding.* Every one in his punishment, beareth his own burden, though possibly his sin, and the sin of his father be punished together.

3. *Correlates are the goods of their Relations.* Children are the great portion of Parents, so are people the riches and goods of Princes: thus *Aquinas* solveth this difficulty, *Filii sunt res parentum.* Thus the learned *Rivet* saith, children have in them *aliquid parentis*; indeed that is something more, children are not only the portion, and goods of their parents, but they are pieces of their parents, and their parents are punished in them. As *David* was punished in the death of his first child by *Bathsheba.* Some may say, this is something, if children were only punished during the life of their parents; but how are their parents punished in them when they are dead, before vengeance cometh upon the child? Answ. *The fear of it all their life-time is a punishment.* 2. *Is it no punishment to them* (though dead) *to have their names blotted out?*

4. The goodness of God is seen in this; *That it is a rational means to do good to the parents, and parents are often advantaged by the punishment of the children.* *David* was so, you know. If God will say to the child, I will punish you, and use your punishment to do good to your parents; what have we to say to it? *If we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren* (as St. *John* determines), certainly if God calls children to it, they ought to be willing to lay down their lives for their parents, if God impose it upon them. *Debent parentibus hoc officium* (saith *Augustine*). *Plutarch* disputing the justice of the gods (he was a Heathen, and that his dialect) in this particular, saith, that *Physitians use to bleed the arm for a pain in the head*, and by a parity of reason, so excuseth the Divine Justice. The Parents have been instruments of giving life to the Children; and God giveth Children many advantages for the Parents sake.

5. In the mean time, *if the children be good and holy, their afflictions are but fatherly chastisements:* Their deaths do but remove them to a better life, so that they have no wrong, not suffering in their souls, nor by eternal punishments for the sins of their parents.

6. Lastly, (saith *Augustine*) *God* by this means *doth maintain discipline, and keep up his authority and government in states, in the world, in his Church, in particular families.* Now who shall deny God the liberty of exercising an act of meer Power and Soveraignty (if it were no more), when by it a discipline and government is kept up in the Universe, and by it many greater disorders and wickednesses are prevented? Sinners are terrified, and the thoughts of the miseries their children may feel for their sins, may affright those who would adventure their own skins, and necks, and souls too. I have now done with the Doctrinal part of this Observation, I come to the Practical Application of this discourse.

Use 1. In the first place this may serve *to satisfie us as to the Justice of God in the distribution of some rewards of this life to the worst of men*; by the rewards of this life, I understand riches, honours, outward prosperity and blessing. It is a saying usually imputed to *Hierom, Omnis Dives est vel injustus, vel injusti hæres*, every rich man is either an unrighteous man, or the *son of an unrighteous man.* I do not know but we may say the contrary, That every prosperous man is either *justus aut hæres justi*, either himself a good and righteous man, or the *child* of such a one; I mean, not the immediate child, but descended from such a one. I will not assert it too universally, but shall refer it to your Observation. If you see a leud and wicked man growing great, rich, prospering much in the world; observe whether he be not one, who like *Jehu*, hath not personally done some eminent service for God: so *Jehu* did, so *Assyria* did, so *Nebuchadnezzar* did, he made his Army to do a great service against *Tyre.* 2. If you cannot find that, enquire if he were not a descendent from some that had done some such service. *Jeroboam* the Son of *Joash Jehu's* Grandchild, was a naughty man, yet the Kingdom of *Israel* had no such time of prosperity, as in his Reign: God did not reward any personal vertue in him, but he rewarded the service which his Grandfather *Jehu* had done against the house of *Ahab.*

Ahab. The prosperity therefore of wicked men should not trouble us, nor be a temptation to us: we should only conclude thus: How much more will the Lord reward his faithful servants, who worship and serve him in truth, and with a perfect heart!

Use 2. In the second place, This may serve to rectifie the mistakes of those who may be under a temptation to say with *David, That they have washed their hands in vain, and cleansed their hearts for nothing*, or (to allude to the Apostles phrase), *We have been fishing all day, and caught nothing.* The error lyeth in your *misapprehensions*, thinking you have no reward, unless it be made to you personally, yea and sensibly too.

1. Is it nothing, *That he who feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him?* And that you have as to this the *continual feast* of a good conscience; no recoilings of your own breast, no sowre reflections from thence? surely this is something, you have *Christs peace*, when-as *to the wicked there is no peace.* This is a reward unspeakable, passing all understanding.

2. If your sufferings be any *testimony for Christ, are they not rewards in themselves?* doth not the Lord honour that person whom he calleth out to be a witness for his name? few are called to suffer for Christ. *Luther* was troubled that God did not think him worthy of such a Crown. The Apostles rejoyced, that the Lord thought them worthy to suffer for the Name of Jesus Christ.

3. But satisfie thy self; *It may be God hath laid up the reward for thy posterity*, and thy children, and childrens children, shall possibly reap what thou hast sown: be assured, good actions shall not be without their reward, but rewards are not all of a kind; no man shall ever say, he hath waited upon the Lord in vain, or sought his face for nothing.

Use. 3. This calleth upon us all to take heed of *sinning against the living God, especially such sins as I have before instanced in*; there are many arguments to be used to defame sin, and to disswade from it. To them all let this be added, *the curse which sin entails upon our posterity*: our sins are sometimes *hid with God, and sealed up in a bag*, and the vengeance of God for them falls not upon our selves, but upon those that come after us. Now the force of this argument lyes in that natural affection which

every man hath for his posterity: he must be a very debauched person that hath no regard to his posterity, every one almost is careful to lay up something for his children, take heed of laying up a treasure of *Divine wrath for them.* If you will not regard your own bodies, the peace of your own breasts, nor your eternal welfare: yet fear sinning against God, because of the vengeance which may for your sin come upon your posterity. It is a terrible Meditation, to consider how many the threatnings of God against children are for the parents sins, *Job* 5. 3, 4. *Eliphaz* saith, *I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation: His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them.* And again, *Job* 17. 5. *He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail; the triumphing of the wicked is but short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment,* Job 5. 20. vers. 10. *His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods.* And *Job* 21. 19. speaking of the wicked, he saith, *God layeth up iniquity for his children.* And *Job* 27. 13, 14. *This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors which they shall receive from the Almighty. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword, and his off-spring shall not be satisfied with bread. David,* who was a Prophet, and by the spirit of Prophecy, did but see and foretel what should come to pass, having to do with wicked and deceitful men, *who,* Psal. 109. 2, 3, 4, 5. *opened their mouths against him, and spake against him with a lying tongue, compassed him about with words of hatred, and fought against him without a cause; for his love were his adversaries, rewarding him evil for good, and hatred for his love;* prayeth: *vers.* 9, 10. *Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow, let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of desolate places.* Isa. 14. 21. In the threatning against *Babel* you find these words, *Prepare slaughter for his children, for the iniquities of their fathers, that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities:* and Psal. 137. 8, 9. *O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us: Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.* The Scripture is full of such prophecies and threatnings, especially in the case of some eminent oppressions or cruelties used by any parents, or some eminent corruptions in worship, &c. Now

should

ſhould not this lay a law upon parents, who are ſo ſollicitous for the good and proſperity of their children when they ſhall not be? God layeth up the iniquities of parents many times for their children. In ſhort, as there is no man that can provide better for his children, than he that worketh righteouſneſs, and eminently ſerveth God in his generation. *I never ſaw the righteous forſaken*, ſaith *David*, *nor their ſeed begging their bread:* ſo none can provide worſe for their children, than by laying up a ſtock of ſin to be revenged upon them. Children are bound by law to pay their Fathers debts to man (that often proves heavy); but this is more dreadful, they often (as to temporal puniſhments) pay their Fathers debts alſo to the Juſtice of God: and this by the way ſheweth us the high advantage of *godly parents*, as the *diſadvantage of thoſe who have had wicked and profane parents*; the former inherit bleſſing, the latter curſing and judgment, very ordinarily upon the account of their parents.

Uſe 4. This obſervation calleth aloud to *thoſe that are children deſcended from wicked and ungodly parents*, (it may be the caſe of ſome that are before me) *to be humbled for the ſins of their parents and predeceſſors.* And, 2. *To take heed of continuing in the ſins of their predeceſſors. Joſia* was thus humbled, and the Lord turned away his wrath that it came not upon him, though it came upon his poſterity, when he was gone to his grave in peace. *Daniel* in his humiliation, *chap* 9. *verſ.* 16. forgets not this, *Becauſe for our ſins, and the iniquity of our fathers, Hieruſalem hath been made a reproach.* The Church complaineth, *Lam.* 5. 7. *Our fathers have ſinned, and are not, and we have born their iniquity.* Is there any here whoſe heart it may be is otherwiſe, but they have had a Father or Predeceſſor, who hath been a cruel bloody man, a perſecutor of the People of God, an hater and enemy of Religion and Godlineſs? I would have ſuch a one think, that although his heart be otherwiſe, yet it is poſſible, his *fathers iniquity may be laid up for him.* The only way to prevent it, and to turn it off, is to get a *tender broken heart for thy forefathers ſins*; to confeſs them, and to be humbled before the Lord for them.

2. But let all men take heed, that *they continue not in them.* You ſhall obſerve it often repeated in Scripture; Such a one *did evil*, and *walked in the ſteps* of his Father, in all the ſins of his Fathers, *&c.* you ſhall conſtantly obſerve that it is ſet as a mark of diſho-

nour

nour upon those that did so, and they perished in their transgressions. God (according to what he threatned the *Jews*, Isa. 65. 7.) punished upon them *their iniquities, and the iniquities of their fathers together.* We are very prone to walk in the steps of our Fathers (especially if they have trodden awry, and turned aside from the Commandments of God): and usually in matters of Religion, though we have nothing to say for the superstition and vanity of former generations; yet we think it a sufficient plea, *that our fathers did thus or thus:* and indeed this was the old plea of the woman of *Samaria*, Joh. 4. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.* Thus the Heretick said in one of the Councils, but was well answered—*Immo errantes ab errantibus*; yes, *erring children, from erring parents.* The wickedness of a preceding generation (especially in the matters of Divine Worship) is so far from being a plea for us, or excusing us, that it doth but increase and aggravate guilt upon us. The most righteous persons may without due and seasonable humiliation smart for the sins of their Fathers; but if they go on in the same sins, they have nothing to expect, but that God should punish their sins, and the sins of their Fathers together.

Use 5. In the last place, This observation layeth upon us all a *new engagement to holiness and serviceableness to God in the stations in which the Lord hath set us.* As sin entaileth a curse, so holiness and eminent service for God entaileth a blessing to our posterity: Godliness hath not only the promise of this life, and of that which is to come to our own persons; but it hath promises of blessing to those that shall come after us: *God sheweth mercy to thousands of those who love him and keep his Commandments. Jehu* was no godly man, yet his service he did for God, procured him a reward to the fourth generation. *Abraham* was a godly man, *David* a perfect man, a man according to Gods own heart. Blessings for their sakes came upon their posterity to many generations. But I shall add no more to this Observation.

SER-

SERMON XXXIII.

Psal. CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I Proceed yet to offer you some further Observations concerning the motions of *Actual Providence*. I have already made many. Last of all, some with reference to its distributions of rewards and punishments. Let me now go on to a

Observ. 20. *When God calleth any to any new work or relation, he ordinarily giveth them a spirit suited to it.*

Every work and relation requires some particular dispositions fitting the persons for it. Now I say, you shall observe in the motions of Actual Providence, that it fitteth those persons for work whom God calleth to it: you shall see it in several instances. God called *Moses* to go in to *Pharaoh*, to require him to let the children of *Israel* go, and so to conduct the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*. *Moses* saith to God, *Exod.* 3. 11. *Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt.* God saith, *vers.* 12. *I will be with thee.* Again, *chap.* 4. 10. *Moses* excuseth himself, that *he was not eloquent, but slow of speech, and of a slow tongue:* see what God saith to him, *ver.* 11. *Who hath made mans mouth, or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Now therefore,* ver. 12. *go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.* When God called *Saul* to be King over *Israel*, the text, 1 *Sam.* 10. 9. saith, *That God gave him another heart.* When God called *David* to the Kingdom, what a spirit of government did God give him? What *courage and valour*, that coming from keeping of *sheep*, he durst adventure to *encounter Goliah*? Concerning *Solomon* the case is plain, 1 *King.* 3. 8, 9. he begged of God a wise and understanding heart to judg his people. The text telleth you, that God

gave

gave it him; *Lo* (saith God, *ver.* 12.) *I have given thee a wise and understanding heart.* As to the Ministry, the case is plain, as to *Jeremiah*, *God ordained him to be a prophet to the nations.* Jer. 1. 5. *Jeremiah* excused himself, *he was a child, and could not speak*, vers. 6. *But the Lord said to him, Say not I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee; and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak: Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee, to deliver thee (saith the Lord); then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, Behold I have put my words into thy mouth*, vers. 7, 8. The like you have concerning *Ezekiel*, *Ezek.* 2. The like you find upon Christs sending out the seventy and the twelve. It is true, God doth this several ways, and by several rites and ceremonies; but God never yet call'd any to any new relation, or new work, but he gave them a spirit fit for it. But let us a little understand what the meaning of that is.

Quest. Wherein lyeth the suitableness of a persons *spirit to his work or relation?*

I answer, It lyes in two things: 1. An *inclination*, or *willingness to it.* 2. *A fittedness* or *preparedness for it.* 1. *An inclination or willingness to it.* Indeed Gods first call of a person to a work, doth not always meet with a *willing mind*, it did not in *Moses*, in *Jeremy*, in *Saul*; but God always makes those willing whom he calls to any service; *Whom shall I send? here am I, send me*, saith the Prophet *Isaiah.* God made *Moses* and *Jeremy* willing before he sent them. The gravity and burthen of the work to which God calleth, may discourage flesh and blood at first, but God makes them willing before they take their Commission. Hence that in *Timothy*, *He that desireth the office of a Bishop*, &c. 2. But this is not all; God never sendeth any to any work, but he fitteth and prepareth them for it, *giving them a frame of spirit, and abilities of mind, capacitating them for the parts of their work, or duties of that relation:* several callings require several gifts and endowments. For the *magistracy*, *courage*, and *wisdom* is necessary: for the *ministry* is necessary, not only *courage* and *wisdom*, but *knowledg*, *utterance*, &c. *a sound understanding* in the holy Scriptures, which he is to open to the people, and apply to their consciences; and so in inferiour relations, even *Bezaliel* the son of *Uri*, *whom the Lord called by name*, to the building of the Tabernacle, *Exod.* 35. 31. *Was filled with the spirit of God in wisdom,*

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dom, and in understanding, and in knowledg, and in all manner of workmanship, and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones to set them, and in cutting of wood to make any manner of cunning work, and God put into his heart to teach others. Hence it is we see such a strange improvement (as we call it) in gifts and parts, in persons called of God to offices of the magistracy or ministry: That once fixed in those relations, there is (as is said of *Saul*) *another spirit given them*, they are quite other men, than they appeared to the world before. The Actual Providence of God attending persons in new works, and new relations, with new spirits, new gifts and abilities.

And indeed this working of Providence seemeth so reasonable, that the contrary cannot be supposed without *a blasphemous impeachment of the wisdom of God*. Which of us unless surprized by our own ignorance, or over-born with some foolish lust or passion of our own, would set any person about our work, that is in nothing fit for it? Indeed our reasonable nature will not allow us wilfully to commit such a mistake; to suppose *ignorance*, or *any bias of passion in God*, were but to blaspheme. Who can without blasphemy say, God hath called a *fool* to be a *magistrate*, or a *coward* to be a *soldier*, or an *ignorant person*, that cannot speak, or not speak sense to be a *Minister?* It is true, Gods gifts are inequally distributed according to the good pleasure of his own will; some have greater abilities for *magistracy* and *ministry* than others have, and so are more eminently qualified for their work: but there are none called of God to any employment, but are in such a competent measure qualified for it, and the principal acts of it, that they are able to do that work; and I say, but to suppose the contrary concerning God, were either to suppose, that God was *surprized with some ignorance*, or *biassed with some passion*, or did that which no reasonable creature would do.

But here ariseth a question. Quest. *How then comes it to pass that we see in the experience of all ages, persons employed in works and relations, by no means, nor in any degree qualified for the work of their relations; cometh this without God?* Is there any thing which escapeth his Providence?

I answer, We are now speaking, not of the *permissions of Providence*, but the *efficiencies of it*. Persons at works, and in relations, which they are in no measure fit or qualified for, *are great*

evils to the world, and these *evils* are not in *Nations* and *Cities* without Gods permission and sufferance. The short of it is this, That sometimes it is in the heart of God *to bless and prosper a people*, and to vouchsafe his presence amongst them; when he doth so, he doth accordingly adequate and proportion means in order to that end. For Magistrates, if he doth not give them men according to *Gods own heart*, such as *David* and *Solomon*; yet he gives them such men whom he hath fitted with a *sutable spirit* to their work, that whatever they be as men, are good governours, men of *valour* and *courage*, men of *prudence* and *conduct*, that know how to manage affairs of state. When God hath a contrary design to chastise and afflict a people, and to punish men for their sins, he suffers such to come in either by *election* or *succession*, as are no ways fitted for the duties of those great relations. So for Ministers, when God designeth to grant, and to continue to a people, his presence and blessing, he gives them faithful Ministers, and such as are able to teach others, to reveal the whole Counsel of God to them, to speak a word in season to the souls that are weary, to bind up the broken in heart, *&c.* But when he hath designs to chasten and scourge any people, he suffereth such to get into the Ministry, as are described, *Isa.* 56. 10. *Blind and ignorant watchmen, dumb dogs, that cannot bark, sleeping, lying down to slumber, greedy dogs which can never have enough, shepheards that cannot understand*, &c. you have this, *Isa.* 1. 25, 26. *And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away thy tin*; that is, I will return in mercy to thee: and what followeth? *And I will restore thy Judges as at the first, and thy Counsellors as at the beginning, afterward thou shalt be called the City of righteousness:* and so for the *Ministry*, Jer. 3. 14, 15. God *ver.* 14. saith, *Turn, O back-sliding children* (saith the Lord) *for I am married unto you, and I will take you one of a City, and two of a tribe, and will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with wisdom, and with understanding.* So again, *Jer.* 23. 3, 4. *vers.* 3. *And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countreys, whither I have driven them; and will bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful, and increase: and I will set up shepheards over them which shall feed them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking* (saith the Lord). On the contrary when God is in a course of vengeance and judgment against a people;

people; when God hath forsaken a people, he suffereth a ministry that *prophecy lyes, but sends them not, Jer.* 27. 14, 15. *For they prophecy a lye unto you, for I have not sent them* (saith the Lord), *yet they prophecy a lye in my name:* see the same, *Jer.* 14. 14, 15. *Jer.* 23. 21, 22. *vers.* 38. The sum of this discourse is this:

That when the Providence of God is moving in a way of mercy, towards *any Nation, Church* or *Family*; he sets persons in *relations to them*, and calleth them to work in them, whom he hath fitted, and doth fit, for the several parts of their work, with such gifts and graces of his spirit, as qualifie and capacitate them for the work and relation to which God calleth them: and this he doth by way of *efficiency*, pouring out his spirit upon such persons; but when he is proceeding in a way of wrath and judgment against a people, either finally to destroy them, or severely to chasten them for their iniquities, then he suffereth such *Rulers*, and *such Ministers* to be over them, or such *governours in any societies* as are no way fit for their work; Rulers that have *no wisdom, nor understanding* proportioned to their relation, no courage nor valour, no principles of justice and righteousness, but such as will (as the Prophet *Amos* expresseth it) *sell the needy for a pair of shooes*, and the *poor for a piece of silver*, and suffereth Ministers to rise up and be allowed, that are *blind, dumb, ignorant, greedy*, indeed not fitted at all for their work, or the several parts of it; but only fitted for Gods design, to be a scourge and a plague to the people, amongst whom they go to seduce them, to tear, to rend, and to devour them: and this you shall observe to be the constant motion of the Actual Providence of God. And thus I have opened the Observation to you, I come now to the Application.

Use 1. In the first place, This observation affordeth us another *sign of the times.* I observed to you before, that we have generally a curiosity to know what shall come to pass in future times, how it shall go, to know both *what God is doing with his Church in the age wherein we live, and what he will do with it in the ages following.* He that maketh this observation, will in this point be *spiritually wise*, and will also *understand the loving-kindness of the Lord*; yea and by this we may understand what the Counsels of God are (in a great measure) as to families and persons. Ob-

ſerve but *what* thoſe are whom God ſets over them, or ſuffers to ſtand in relation to them, and you will underſtand much of this. If God intendeth mercy and goodneſs to any Nation or any Church, he giveth them *Judges* and *Counſellors* as at the beginning. Eccl. 10. 16, 17. *Wo to thee, O Land, when thy King is a Child, and Princes eat in the morning. Bleſſed art thou, O Land, when thy King is the ſon of Nobles, and thy Princes eat in due ſeaſon, for ſtrength, and not for drunkenneſs.* Obſerve but in the ſtate who are in the places of Magiſtrates, whether they be men of *wiſdom, and knowledge,* of *juſtice,* and *righteouſneſs,* or men of little wiſdom, raſh and inconſiderate men, men of little knowledge, men that will take bribes, and oppreſs the poor, and needy in judgment, not ſuffering the cauſes of the poor to ſtand in judgment; and you may eaſily judge what God is about with that Nation. Look into the Church of God, and obſerve what perſons they are, that are in the Miniſtry: Whether they be men that are able and faithful to teach, skilled in the words of righteouſneſs, able to open and apply the holy Scriptures to the hearts and Conſciences of people, to pray and to pour out their ſouls unto God in ſupplications: Or men that were *Aptiores ad ſtivam,* (as *Beza* ſometimes ſaid). I may add, *ad cauponam vel tabernam,* fitter for a Plow-tail, for an Ale-houſe, a Tavern, or a Victualling-houſe, and it needeth no interpreter to you, what God is about to do with ſuch a Church. In like manner, look into families, look upon particular perſons; obſerve what manner of perſons are in the relations of Husbands, Wives, Parents, Children; and you may eaſily know Gods preſent deſign, or what he is after like to do in ſuch families, or as to ſuch perſons. Where God intendeth mercy, he fitteth perſons for their reſpective relations in all humane ſocieties.

Uſe 2. Hence (again) in the ſecond place, each one may make *a judgement of himſelf, whether God hath called him to this or that work,* this or that *Relation.* A man can have little comfort in any relation, to which he cannot ſee himſelf *called of God*; be it *Magiſtracy* or *Miniſtry,* or any other Relation, when we ſee God calling us to it, we may *look for Gods bleſſing upon us in it,* ay and we may, in that caſe alſo expect *Gods protection*; his ſtanding by us, and ſtanding up for us againſt *Oppoſition*: now neither of theſe can in other cauſes be expected. I ſay, 1. A perſon called of God to any

any work, any relation, may reasonably *expect the blessing of God upon him in it*: If he be a Magistrate, that God should make his government peaceable, and prosperous, subduing the people under him, and subjecting their spirits to his Govenment: If he be a Minister, that God should direct his meditations, assist his heart in enditing new matter, and his tongue that it should be the tongue of a ready writer, blessing his labours, and giving in to his ministry the souls of the people committed to his charge. He may expect Gods protection and defence of him against the opposition that he meets with. It is a promise you ordinarily meet with annexed to precepts, by which God hath commissioned men to be Ministers. *I will be with you*, it is what God said to *Jeremiah*, to *Ezechiel*. What *Christ* said to his Apostles, *I will* (saith he) *be with you to the end of the world*; now that promise reacheth to both these, both *assistance* and *protection*; and therefore it is of mighty concern to such as ingage in great work, or are put into any great relation, to see *Gods call of them to that work or relation*; without a view of that I again tell you, they can expect the presence of God no way, neither blessing, nor protecting them. Now from this observation upon the motions of *Actual Providence* you may make up a judgement of that. *Actual Providence* fits them for that work and Relation, whom God calleth to it; it doth not fit every one for it, whom it suffereth to creep into it, but it fits all for their work whom God directs into it, and who are like to be a blessing to their Correlates: and those who cannot find themselves fitted of God for the work and acts of that Relation wherein they are, may conclude, that though they be not in that station *without God*; yet God hath nothing further to do with them in their station, but to *permit them* to get into it for a plague and *scourge* to the people, to whom they are in relation, and for their own *damnation*, and *confusion at the last*. Is any one a *Minister*, (to instance only in that Relation) he stands most highly concerned of all men living to see his call; (the charge of souls, men will at last find a great and burthensom charge). If he be *faithful*, he is like to meet with the greatest opposition imaginable in that work, he stands in need of the greatest *assistance of God*, for the due performance of it: he can look for neither, unless he can find that God hath called him to his work. The great acts of the *ministerial office*, are *praying* and *preaching*; *praying for the people*: Preaching, that is, *open-*

ing the Scriptures, the will and counsel of God unto people, and applying it to their Consciences. Wouldst thou know now whether *thou beest called of God as* Aaron *was*. Examine then *whether God hath fitted thee for the work of the ministry*. Hath God given thee *the Spirit of prayer, and supplication*? hath God given thee a knowledge and understanding in the Scriptures, that thou art (as it was said of *Apollos*) *mighty in the Scriptures*; such a one a Minister should be. If Gods providence hath given thee a willingness, and a desire to it, and an opportunity for the exercise of it, and hath also thus qualified thee for the several parts of it, then thou mayest conclude, that God hath called thee to it. It is not a *Patrons presentation* that will make up the call of God, no nor yet the boldness and confidence of the person that will venture upon the greatest employment the world affords. I say none of these things will do it; a mans own needs, and not knowing how to live, may make him willing and desirous, but they are only the gifts and graces of Gods spirit, that can make a man fit for the Ministry; and God never sends any to any work, but his Providence fitteth them for it; and the same may be said of any other *Relations*, or of persons employed in any great work. And as persons imployed in any work or relation, may thus judge of themselves: So also their *Correlates*, to whom they are in relation, may by this means know how to judge of those who are in relation to them, whether they be *called of God or no*, and be such or no, with whom they can expect the presence of God, and from whom they may expect Gods blessing; and this if duly thought upon should strike a terror into men, in places and employments especially *relating to the worship of God*, and in trust with souls, who are no more qualified for their work, than an *Ass is for a Fiddle*, as we say; what will these men say, when their Consciences come to arrest them with a *what doest thou here without thy wedding-garment*? That is, without those gifts and graces, without that heart and spirit, which should have qualified thee for such a work, and which God never faileth to furnish him with, whom he calls to any employment for him. Or when they shall come to dye, and have no sweeter reflections of Conscience than this: I have these 20, 30, 40 years been Gods scourge and plague to this people, soothing up this people *in their sins, blinding their eyes, hardning their hearts*, meerly eating up that bread which should have fed other faithful Pastors, who were able to

have

have prayed for them, able to have instructed them, which I have not been. O the searedness of these mens Consciences; *O the dreadful vengeance of God, that hangs over their heads!* O the strange quantity of the blood of souls which God will require at these pitiful wretches hands! Let not my soul enter into these mens secrets, let not their portion be mine, O my God!

Use 3. But in the third place, Let me caution you, that *you do not think that the Providence of God doth alike qualifie every person for the duties of his relation.* As in the Heavens there are different Stars, and they differ one from another in glory: Every Star is a light, but some give a far greater, and more glorious light than others; so it is in the *Church of God* (Ministers, you know, are compared to Stars) they must all be lights; they must all be able to shew light, both in their *Doctrine*, and also in their *Lives*; but yet some are more glorious lights than others are, more burning, more shining.

God calleth no man to the Ministry, but they are *able to pray, able to preach* (he sets no dumb dogs to keep his sheep): he sets none over his people to be their *Bishops* but they are *blameless, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no strikers*, &c. as in 1 *Tim.* 3. 2, 3, 4. sober, just, holy, temperate, *&c.* as 1 *Titus* 7. 8. It is little less than *Blasphemy*, to say God calls a man to *pray or preach*, that can do none of both; that God calleth *Drunkards* to teach men sobriety, or *unclean persons to teach them chastity*, or *covetous wretches* to teach men hospitality, or liberality. But yet some may be of more eminent gifts for prayer and preaching; some may be more *eminent in grace*, more exemplary in holiness than others. God hath several stations for Ministers; some he sets upon Hills, some he placeth in obscure Valleys. And indeed herein the *Church*, I mean the Rulers and Governours of a Church, seem to have a great judgment. They shall not judge a person fit for the Ministry, that is apparently unfit, not being able to discharge any part of the ministerial work: but they shall judge of the degrees of persons, gifts and abilities, so as to place persons in stations fit for them, and as will be best for the edification of the whole. But the caution which I offer you in this branch of Application, if you well consider it, is of great use.

1. That

1. *To restrain the unwarrantable judgement, and censures of less knowing, and prudent Christians*; who are ready to censure good men of weaker parts, and abilities for the work of praying, and preaching, as no true Ministers, not called of God to their work. Is the person a man of a holy life, and conversation? Is he a person able to *pray and preach substantially*, though it may be not so *fluently*, not so *floridly* as some others, not with that *life and affection*, not with that learning and *clearness of demonstration*? Take heed of judging in this case, God distributeth his gifts variously, though always to edification of the whole Church. In his Church there are some *Babes*, some *grown Persons*; some that must be fed with milk, others that must have strong meat. God qualifieth some to *give milk* to the Babes, others to *give meat to stronger ones*: indeed the wonderful wisdom of God is to be seen in this disproportioning of his gifts to his several Ministers. We are poor vain creatures, and though *blessed be God!* some learned men of great reason, and learning are to be found, that can deny themselves in their ministerial work, and preach to the capacity and understanding of poor creatures; yet *Quotusquisq; est*, he is one of a thousand that we see doing so; we are like *Pedlars*, that think, we must shew all that is in our Pack, though they be little better than gay baubles; and confound poor souls, either with our *Metaphysical Speculations*, or *logical ratiocinations*, or with our *Rhetorical flourishes*. God foresaw this vanity in our hearts, and hath therefore graciously provided, restraining the exhibition of his gifts, and not giving unto many abilities to do so; that if they would, they cannot wrap up the plain truths of God in such mysteries of phrase and reasonings (which are but *vain Philosophy*), but are forced to speak more plainly and intelligibly to peoples souls; that their preaching neither is, nor can be *in the enticing words of mans wisdom, nor in the language of men that are puffed up*, but is far more *in the evidence and demonstration of the spirit, and in the power of God*, though less in the insignificant wisdom of men.

2. This *Caution* is useful also to *relieve the Consciences of good men, who* are often-times *troubled* under the sense of the *disparity and disproportion of their own gifts and parts, to the gifts and parts of others. I have* known it the case of some. Look as it hath been with some Christians, for want of some gifts, which at best have been but common gifts, such as that of *Prayer*, they have

have been ready to question whether they have any truth of grace, yea or no. So I have known some precious godly Ministers in their melancholick, dark-hours, questioning whether they have not all their life-time invaded the Ministerial function; whether ever they were called of God to the work of the Ministry, meerly because they have been conscious to themselves, that they have not had those eminent gifts and parts which they have heard others shew. This trouble is as groundless as the other. God doth not give to all his Ministers, the same proportion of parts and gifts. Indeed to every one whom he calleth to the Ministry he giveth such a proportion of gifts as shall qualifie them, that they shall be able both to Pray and Preach, so as not be a just loathing to any honest hearts. I will never believe that God hath called any man to the Ministry, who cannot without his Book, upon any occasion pray for the people committed to his trust, or for any of them, according to any particular occasion offered him; or that cannot Preach. But this is a most unjustifiable scruple; God doth not give gifts alike unto all, no not unto all those whom yet he calls unto his work.

Use. 4. In the fourth place, *This observation may be of great use to relieve the spirits of the people of God, under the temptations of their own fears*; when God calleth them to Relations and works, to which they do not find such a fitness, as (possibly) they desire to find, and according to the exactness of the Divine rule ought to be found in persons set in their circumstances. It is a frequent case, and that, 1. With reference to *new Relations.* 2 *To some new work, especially where suffering attends it*; we often find the spirits of good people disturbed upon both accounts. Some with reference to their duty *in their relations*, they are afraid they should not honour God in the Relations of *Husbands*, *Wives*, *Parents*, &c. they do not find their spirits suted to it. Some with *reference to suffering*, they do not find *it is given to them on the behalf of Christ to suffer.* Now in this case truly, I think, two things are to be said.

1. That in such cases, *Nothing but sin on the other hand, can oblige such persons to enter any such relations, or to expose themselves to any work.* The case may be so that a necessity may be laid on Christians to enter such, *and such relations.* Thus it may be in the case of publick Relations, in the case of Magistrates and

Ministers; oftentimes *vox populi* is *vox Dei*, the suffrage of the people is the voice God: and so in case of more domestick Relations, there may be a necessity laid upon single persons to marry, to become Husbands, Wives, Parents, Governours of Families; a necessity from *nature*, or upon some *moral accounts*, which may be divers, obedience to Parents, the comfortable support of our selves in the world, *&c.* and so as to *work*, there may be a necessity, the work must be done, there is none to do it, I am the person pitched upon, either I must do it or none. So in case of *suffering*, either I must suffer, or I must sin against God. This is certain, there can be no necessity of sinning; in this case there is a necessity of suffering. Here the *call of God* is plain, *necessity imposed upon us is an unquestionable call.* But, I say, supposing no such necessity, but that it is *res integra*, as we say, we are not urged by any necessity of sinning, I would have none put themselves into any relation, nor upon any work, nor expose themselves to any suffering, but such as find in themselves an inclination to it, and some measure of habitual preparation, and qualifications for it; and it is that, which if I remember right, the generality of Divines do determine in the case of *persecution*, and *the lawfulness of flight in the time of persecution*; advising all, that do not find a spirit within them suted to suffering, to fly from one City to another, where they can do it under such circumstances, as they shall not be sinners against God for the doing of it.

But, 2. Where the *call of God* to them is clear, that is, that they must *enter that Relation*, they must do that work, they must expose themselves to that suffering, or they must do that which their Consciences will condemn them for as sinners: here is nothing to be done, but for the souls that are concerned to enter into such Relations, to undertake such work, to expose themselves to such sufferings; committing themselves unto God, believing that he who hath called them to it, will carry them through it; for the Providence of God doth very ordinarily with a new relation, and new work, give a new spirit. And experience tells us, that none have gone through a new relation or work, better than those who at first most dreaded it, and distrusted themselves, and trembled most at the apprehensions of it. You have seen sometimes a Dog, that being about to take the water, hath stood upon the brink, shaking and trembling, who when he hath been tumbled in, or of himself leaped in, hath swame through well

well enough. And abundance of inſtances might be given of ſuch, as when the Providence of God hath called them to ſuffering, have ſtood trembling, and been afraid to venture; who when the Providence of God hath thrown them upon the work, and neceſſitated them to it, or when (having got a victory over their own fears), they have adventured upon it, none have behaved themſelves, nor been more valiant in the ſpiritual fight, than they have been: God hath made good his promiſe to them. When they have been in the waters, God hath been with them; and when they have been in the fires, God hath been with them, and hath not ſuffered the waters to drown them, nor yet the flames to kindle upon them. It is but an ordinary motion of Providence to come in to the help and aſſiſtance of, and to fit thoſe for a new work and new relation, whom he hath call'd to it. Only be ſure that in caſe you find a reluctancy in your own ſpirits, and you cannot ſee your call from Gods fitting you, and ſpiriting you for your relation, or for your work; that you ſee your call from a *neceſſity*, which the Providence of God hath impoſed on you, that you cannot avoid it without ſinning againſt God.

Uſe 5. In the laſt place, Doth God ordinarily ſute men whom he calleth to any new work, or new relation, with a ſpirit ſuted to their new capacity? This ſhould engage all men then to *co-work with God*, uſing ſuch means as have any *natural, moral, or religious tendency, to fit them for the diſcharge of the truſt which God hath repoſed in them, or the work to which God hath called them.* Our relations and works are very various and different, and accordingly there is a great difference of means to be uſed for the improvement of our ſelves into a capacity to do the duty of our places. It cannot be expected that I ſhould ſpeak to all, ſome I will ſhortly ſpeak unto. Shall God call you, or any of you to the place of a *Magiſtrate?* That now is a place and relation, the fitting of a perſon for which requireth *Knowledg, Wiſdom, Courage.* You have heard that when God calleth any perſon to a place, he uſually fitteth them with a ſpirit for it, as he gave unto *Saul another ſpirit* (the Scripture ſaith) a ſpirit quite different from what he had when he was a private perſon. But you are not now to expect this in a way of *Enthuſiaſm*, but in the uſe of means, reading books, gaining of knowledg, indeavouring to bridle ſuch paſſions as become no man, but are leaſt of all be-

Ministers; oftentimes *vox populi* is *vox Dei*, the suffrage of the people is the voice God: and so in case of more domestick Relations, there may be a necessity laid upon single persons to marry, to become Husbands, Wives, Parents, Governours of Families; a necessity from *nature*, or upon some *moral accounts*, which may be divers, obedience to Parents, the comfortable support of our selves in the world, *&c.* and so as to *work*, there may be a necessity, the work must be done, there is none to do it, I am the person pitched upon, either I must do it or none. So in case of *suffering*, either I must suffer, or I must sin against God. This is certain, there can be no necessity of sinning; in this case there is a necessity of suffering. Here the *call of God* is plain, *necessity imposed upon us is an unquestionable call.* But, I say, supposing no such necessity, but that it is *res integra*, as we say, we are not urged by any necessity of sinning, I would have none put themselves into any relation, nor upon any work, nor expose themselves to any suffering, but such as find in themselves an inclination to it, and some measure of habitual preparation, and qualifications for it; and it is that, which if I remember right, the generality of Divines do determine in the case of *persecution*, and *the lawfulness of flight in the time of persecution*; advising all, that do not find a spirit within them suted to suffering, to fly from one City to another, where they can do it under such circumstances, as they shall not be sinners against God for the doing of it.

But, 2. Where the *call of God* to them is clear, that is, that they must *enter that Relation*, they must do that work, they must expose themselves to that suffering, or they must do that which their Consciences will condemn them for as sinners: here is nothing to be done, but for the souls that are concerned to enter into such Relations, to undertake such work, to expose themselves to such sufferings; committing themselves unto God, believing that he who hath called them to it, will carry them through it; for the Providence of God doth very ordinarily with a new relation, and new work, give a new spirit. And experience tells us, that none have gone through a new relation or work, better than those who at first most dreaded it, and distrusted themselves, and trembled most at the apprehensions of it. You have seen sometimes a Dog, that being about to take the water, hath stood upon the brink, shaking and trembling, who when he hath been tumbled in, or of himself leaped in, hath swame through

well

well enough. And abundance of instances might be given of such, as when the Providence of God hath called them to suffering, have stood trembling, and been afraid to venture; who when the Providence of God hath thrown them upon the work, and necessitated them to it, or when (having got a victory over their own fears), they have adventured upon it, none have behaved themselves, nor been more valiant in the spiritual fight, than they have been: God hath made good his promise to them. When they have been in the waters, God hath been with them; and when they have been in the fires, God hath been with them, and hath not suffered the waters to drown them, nor yet the flames to kindle upon them. It is but an ordinary motion of Providence to come in to the help and assistance of, and to fit those for a new work and new relation, whom he hath call'd to it. Only be sure that in case you find a reluctancy in your own spirits, and you cannot see your call from Gods fitting you, and spiriting you for your relation, or for your work; that you see your call from a *necessity*, which the Providence of God hath imposed on you, that you cannot avoid it without sinning against God.

Use 5. In the last place, Doth God ordinarily sute men whom he calleth to any new work, or new relation, with a spirit suted to their new capacity? This should engage all men then to *co-work with God*, using such means as have any *natural, moral, or religious tendency, to fit them for the discharge of the trust which God hath reposed in them, or the work to which God hath called them.* Our relations and works are very various and different, and accordingly there is a great difference of means to be used for the improvement of our selves into a capacity to do the duty of our places. It cannot be expected that I should speak to all, some I will shortly speak unto. Shall God call you, or any of you to the place of a *Magistrate?* That now is a place and relation, the fitting of a person for which requireth *Knowledg, Wisdom, Courage.* You have heard that when God calleth any person to a place, he usually fitteth them with a spirit for it, as he gave unto *Saul another spirit* (the Scripture saith) a spirit quite different from what he had when he was a private person. But you are not now to expect this in a way of *Enthusiasm*, but in the use of means, reading books, gaining of knowledg, indeavouring to bridle such passions as become no man, but are least of all be-

seeming Magistrates. Courage indeed is a thing that is hardly got by art, though natural courage be governed and regulated by it; and often is given by God more immediately, when any whom he hath called to any new relation, hath more especial need of it. But above all, remember the course that *Solomon* took, when God appeared unto him in *Gibeon* (upon his taking upon him the government of *Israel* and *Judah*): He prayeth unto God, that he would give *him a wise and an understanding heart*, to judg his people. O forget not this, hath God called thee to be a Magistrate? and doest thou distrust thy self, lest thou shouldst fail in Wisdom, or in Courage, as to the work of God which in that relation will lye upon thy soul? Remember what God said in some anger to *Moses*, excusing himself from what God had call'd him to, to go into *Pharaoh* to speak for the dismission of his people; and *Moses* excused himself, saying, *Exod.* 4. 20. *O Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue*; *and the Lord said unto him*, vers. 11. *Who hath made mans mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I* (saith the Lord)? *Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.* Remember that and go, and beg of God to supply unto thee, what thou findest wanting in thy self, beg *Wisdom* of that God, who is only *wise*, and *courage* of that God *who giveth courage unto man.* Hath God called thee to the work of the Ministry? and though thou darest not say, but God hath in some measure fitted thee for it; yet thou seest thou art far short of others, far short of what thou conceivest thou oughtest to be. I have told thee that God useth with his call to a new work, to a new relation, to give a new spirit; but it is thy work and duty here to work together with God. Thus the Apostle exhorteth *Timothy*, 1 *Tim.* 4. 12, 13, 14. *Be thou an example of believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity*; *till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, neglect not the gift which was given thee by prophecy*, &c. Meditate upon *these things, give thy self wholly to them.* Art thou called to be a Minister? *Stir up, neglect not the gift of God which is in thee*; *study, meditate of these things.* There are means to be used for thy improvement in thy ministerial abilities: Natural means, that is, exercise; by preaching, thou shalt learn to preach, and by praying thou shalt improve in the gift of prayer:

Moral

Moral means, these are *searching the Scriptures, study, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, Meditation: Religious*, that is, *Prayer*. The Apostle saith of the work of the Ministry, *Who is sufficient for these things?* Whatsoever thy gifts and abilities be, thou hadst need profit and improve in them. If thou wilt improve them, and obtain the blessing from God of a further fitting thee for the work to which thou art called, it lyeth upon thee to use such means as God hath appointed in order to that end. *Luther* was wont to say, that there are three things which make a Divine, *Temptations*, *Meditation*, and *Prayer*; the two latter I am sure must be much our own work; we must not expect that God should immediately qualifie us from Heaven, as he did in the first Plantation of the Gospel, by the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. God having so supplied the first necessities of his Church, when the generality of the first Preachers of the Gospel were illiterate men, and wanted advantages of education (which then lay on the other side), hath since that time left his Ministers to the use and application of more ordinary means, in the use of which he ordinarily concurreth with his blessing, and not otherwise. The same might be said of more inferiour relations, such as those of conjugal and parental relations. God ordinarily when he calleth men to them, doth sute men with spirits fit for them; but the concurrence of their own indeavours must be understood, with which God will concur with his own blessing. Art thou therefore called to the relation of an husband or wife? and doest thou fear thy own spirit (the like also may be said of a parental relation)? Having entred into it, asking counsel of Gods Word, and observing the rules of it, thou hast reason to trust God for the fitting of thy spirit for it, and the duties of it; but still using all due means, which on thy part are to be used, such as the *mortification of those passions* which appear to thee most indisposing thee for the duties of such relations, applying thine heart, what in thee lyeth, to them, and constant and fervent prayer to God to make up in thee, what thou findest wanting in thy self for the due managery of them according to the Will of God.

SER-

SERMON XXXIV.

Psalm CVII. 43.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things: even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

I Have entred into a large field. How great a Volume might be wrote, *de observandis Providentiæ*, concerning the observable things of Divine Providence. I have seen a picture (one of those you call kitchin-pieces) concerning which it hath been proposed to me, that for so many hours I should view it as curiously as I could; yet the proposer would for any wager undertake to shew me something in it which I did not observe. Truly Providence is such a thing, I can never look upon it, I can never take the motions of it into my thoughts, but some new observation tendreth it self to my thoughts. I must turn my eyes from this wonderful work, for I see they will not be satisfied with seeing, my mind will never be filled with observing. Many observations I have already made, and behold *yet a troop cometh.* But they have all a tendency to the augmentation of spiritual Wisdom in my own, and your souls. *Whoso is wise, will observe these things* (saith my Text) they have a tendency to make you to *understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* Where can we be better employed? what can we better do? Methinks I could say with the disciple upon the Mount of transfiguration: *It is good for us to be here, let us build our selves tabernacles:* One for me the speaker, others *for you that are to be my hearers.* Let me therefore go on. Doth therefore any of you say unto me, *Seer, What seest thou?* I answer, yet once more. I observe in the motions of *Actual Providence*,

Observ. 21. *That God commandeth his sensible blessings most upon those individual persons, and those societies of the children of men*,

men, that live in the most exact conformity to the Divine Rule. Here are two terms in this Observation, upon the Explication of which I will a little insist.

Quest. 1. *What is meant by sensible blessings?*

Quest. 2. *What I mean by the most exact conformity to the Divine Rule?*

Good things are distributed several ways, in order to our comprehension of them by our understandings: amongst others this is one distribution of them, they are either *sensible*, or *insensible*. By sensible good things, I understand such as are obvious to our senses, and perceptible by them. By *insensible*, such as have a reality of good in them, but yet not such as our senses discern. Thus *David* saith, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted*, but yet afflictions are not *sensible good things*: all such are the objects of our joy and delight. *Now* (saith the Apostle) *no affliction at the present is joyous, but grievous, but it bringeth forth the quiet fruit of righteousness, to them that are exercised therewith.* But I say God commandeth sensible blessings mostly, upon persons and societies living in the best square, and most exact conformity unto the Divine Rule.

2. Further yet, *Sensible blessings* are capable of a *double notion*, they are either *such as are obvious only to the inward senses of those that are made partakers of them:* such are *peace of conscience, joy in the holy God*; that serenity and tranquillity of mind, which is the effect of righteousness, the new-name which none knoweth, but he that hath it: but there are other good things, which are the objects of our more exteriour senses; such are *health, prosperity, success in trade*, &c. blessings in relations, *&c.* Now my Observation is, That the *Actual Providence* of God doth usually distribute good things of this nature, to such persons, and such societies of persons as live to the truest square, and exactest conformity to the Divine Rule.

That is a general, and must be opened also. The Divine Rule, as to families and persons, is of a great compass, but the whole of it is reducible to three heads: *viz. Piety, Justice*, and *Charity*; under each of these are several particulars, but none which fall not under one of these generals.

1. *Piety* consists in the *internal*, and external acts of homage which we owe unto God. Our internal acts are, *Fear, Faith, Love.* Our external acts are principally *Prayer* and *Praise, reading the word*, &c.

2. Justice

2. Justice *is an habit, disposing us to give every one their due.*

3. By *Charity*, I mean here mutual brotherly love. Now look where these things best prosper, there God commandeth most sensible blessings in the ordinary motions of his Providence. Particular instances may be exceptions from a general rule: but ordinarily it is so. What the Psalmist saith of one of these, is true of all, *There God commandeth the blessing*, Psal. 133. 3. There, where? it may be interpreted with reference to the words, which immediately precedes, *the mountain of Zion*; but I take it to be far more proper to refer it to the first verse, which contains the argument of the whole Psalm: *O* (saith the Psalmist) *how good, and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* This he illustrateth by two similitudes; the one is *the oyl which was poured upon the head of Aaron, and ran down to the skirts of his garment.* Vers. 2. The other *is the dew of Hermon, that descended on the mountain of Zion, for* (saith the Psalmist) *there the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore.* There, where? *where brethren together dwell in unity:* it is as true, there, where Religion is exercised, where all relations give their due one to another: *there God commandeth the blessing.* Now for the proof of this, I shall but appeal to your experience, and what you see every day.

1. Look into the world, there you shall see *nations of various complexions*, some in which the *true God is worshipped in a true manner*; *others wherein Devils are worshipped, or stocks or stones*: or if the *true God* be indeed worshipped, yet it is not as he hath directed, but by *images and superstitious rites and observances*; some nations that are nothing else but *rapine* and *violence*, and *oppression*, full of *strife and hatred*, and *malice*, and *wars*, and *dissensions*. You on the other side will see other Nations, amongst whom the true God is worshipped, and that in a true manner, where are good laws against oppression and injustice, and for distributive and commutative Justice, where men are not hunted and persecuted for their consciences towards God. Mark if God doth not *command the blessing of riches, trade*, &c. more upon the latter than the former. It is true, some of those Countreys where these iniquities are found, are naturally richer than others, in minerals, and the Native Commodities of the Countrey; but for adventitious riches, which come from Trade and Commerce, and for other sensible blessings, observe if they be not poured out in a

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greater plenty upon Nations, that in matters of Religion, civil Justice and Unity, have been regulated by laws conformable to the Word of God, than upon other Nations, where none of these things have been regarded.

2. If you will straiten your prospect, look upon any Cities, or Towns, or any kind of political societies, you will see some of these places, such as *Egypt* was, of which *Abraham* said, *The fear of God was not in that place*, where all their Religion is to persecute those that have any thing of Religion in them. No rules of justice and brotherly love are observed, but they are full of violence, and oppression, and fraud; there is nothing in them but the inhabitants biting and devouring one another, the cry of the oppressed is in their street. Other places you will find, where Religion is cherished and countenanced; where the word of God is livelily and powerfully preached, and men live in some seeming awe of it; where rules of civil Justice are observed, and men can have Justice in Courts of Judicature, and the people live in peace and amity one with another; observe again which of these God most commandeth his blessing upon. I might appeal to your like observation, concerning families and particular persons. But it is no more than every one may observe. Consider what an Hell upon Earth, some Cities, some Families are in comparison of others, and see what makes the difference both in the *beauty* and in the *prosperity* of them: And it needs must be so, if you please to consider,

1. *The natural tendency of these things to so happy products.*

2. *That God in pursuance of his many promises, doth there command the blessing.*

First, In the first place it will appear to be but a reasonable motion of Providence, there to distribute sensible blessings, where men either in their single capacities, or in their political societies live in the exactest square and conformity to the Divine Rule, in matters of *distributive and commutative justice, and brotherly love and amity*; if you but consider *the natural tendency of these things to promove the felicity of any persons or societies*, together with the direct tendency of a contrary converse to the ruin and undoing of them. *Justice* and *Unity*, or amicable living each with other, are the two *pillars* of humane society, as the Scripture saith of *Rachel* and *Leah*, *Ruth.* 4. 11. *They two did build up the house of Israel:* so it must be said of these two, *Justice* and *bro-*

thetly love, they are the two things which build up humane society; and the Nation which keepeth not up these two pillars, and preserveth them not in those due repairs, which the lusts and corruptions of men will make them to stand in a daily need of, will quickly fall under the ruins of them; it must necessarily be *a Kingdom divided against it self, which* (as our Saviour hath told us) *cannot stand*. Where the first, *viz. Justice* faileth, no man knoweth what to call his own; every mans estate is exposed to the *fraud, violence*, and rapines of his wicked neighbour. Where *Amity* and *Unity* (which is the other) fails, men are continually biting, and devouring, rending, and tearing one another; none are willing to trade or traffique, or to have any commerce with any such people; or if they have, it is so sparingly, and with so much caution, as is no way consistent with that liberty and freedom, and that mutual confidence each in another, which such a state requireth, as is capable of those kind of blessings, or in a rational or probable way to receive them. You cannot but observe how every one is willing to be acquainted, and to deal with persons that have a reputation; for moral honesty and matters of justice in bargains, and barters, in buyings and sellings, and exchange. Now the outward blessing of riches and prosperity, as to business, depending much upon society, good understandings betwixt each of other, and good opinions of persons engaged in the same societies, which may dispose men to just and mutual confidences each in other; it is not at all to be wondred at, if those places and persons thrive best, amongst whom these are found which are the rational means agreeing to such an end. The like might be said of other moral vertues, such as are *temperance* and *sobriety*, being rational means, tending to the preservation of mens *lives* and *health*, which are other sensible blessings. It is not at all to be wondred, that these blessings which are the end, do naturally follow the proper means, even as the thred followeth the needle in the hands of the sempstress. God hath so ordered it, that ends shall be ordinarily obtained in the use of means, always supposing the ordinary Providence of God, which must give the blessing upon any means used in order to any end.

2. But secondly, There is more than this in it, *God in the pursuance of his many promises, doth there command the blessing*. I am speaking of ordinary cases (for Gods particular design to chasten any persons, or to try them, makes an exception to these however gene-

general rules), God hath promised his sensible things, *Matth.*6.32. *To those who first seek the Kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof*, he hath told them, that *these things shall be added to them.* Godliness hath the promise as of that life which is to come; so of this life (as the Apostle tells us): the promise to *brethren living together in unity*, Psal. 133. you heard before, there God *commandeth the blessing* (saith the Psalmist); and (mark) what blessing it is, it is like the oyl poured upon the head of *Aaron*, which ran down to the *skirts of his garment, like the dew upon the hill of Hermon*, which made the Earth fruitful, the blessing of *plenty* and *prosperity.* And for promises to the doing *justice* and *judgment*, they are so many in Scripture, that it were almost infinite to repeat them. I shall only commend this observation to you, *That you shall quite through the Scripture find the execution of justice and judgment, made one term that God puts upon people, in order to the receiving of any mercy from him, and injustice, violence, and oppression, constantly enumerated as those sins, to which are annexed all the threatnings of taking away those temporal blessings which a Nation doth enjoy.* Indeed, unless prophaneness and irreligion, or idolatrous and undue worship of God, almost all the sins for which you find threatnings of the deprival of temporal sensible blessings are reducible to one of these heads, either being failers in matters of civil justice, or of that brotherly love and amity which God hath required. So that this is as a very ordinary, so a most reasonable motion of Divine Providence, and what we cannot but in reason expect from its hand. But I come to the Application of this discourse.

Use 1. As my other Observations, so this also is of great use to us, to increase in us *spiritual wisdom*, and to make us *understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.*

1. *To increase in us spiritual wisdom.* Wisdom is a practical habit, disposing us to order our affairs in the best manner, in order to *our own good.* Good is that which every man desires; *who will shew us any good*, is the general language of the world. There be many (saith the Psalmist) that say, *Who will shew us any good?* And though the hearts of Gods People be after *spiritual good*, *Lord* (saith *David*) *lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me:* yet this is not that good which *the many* look after, but the increase of their corn, and wine, and oyl. We will take men at

that advantage, and ſuppoſe the queſtion to be what courſe a man ſhould take to be bleſſed with corn, wine and oyl, with the good things of this life, long life, riches, trade, ſucceſs in worldly affairs: if this obſervation be true, the beſt courſe, is for Nations, Cities, Perſons to govern themſelves, by the Divine Rule, to ſet up and promove the profeſſion and practice of Religion; to execute juſtice and judgement, to live in brotherly love, unity and amity one with another. Whoſo therefore would be wiſe for himſelf, according to the worlds meaſures of wiſdom, is obliged to this: hence it is that in Scripture, and eſpecially in the book of *Proverbs*, the ſinner is called a fool, the godly man is counted a wiſe man; and the truth is, whether perſons conſider themſelves, as beings ordained to an eternity, or meerly as fleſh and blood, and bodily compoſitions, who (as is natural to all creatures) have a natural deſire to live, as long as they can, and as free from pain and miſery as they can, and with as many ſweetneſſes, and advantage of life as they can, I ſay, which way ſoever men will conſider themſelves, or whatſoever they will place their ultimate felicity in; whether it be in the enjoyment and viſion of God to eternity, or in living long, and happy; Still it is their higheſt wiſdom, both in their perſonal capacities, and in their relative capacities, as they ſtand related to others in their political, or œconomical relations, as Princes, Subjects, Husbands, Wives, Parents, Children, Maſters or Servants, to govern them according to the rules, and by the ſquare of the word of God. Now the obſervation, I ſay, of theſe ordinary diſpoſitions of Divine Providence, muſt therefore be exceedingly conducive to the increaſe of ſpiritual wiſdom in our ſouls.

2. This Obſervation will alſo teach us, *to underſtand the loving kindneſs of the Lord.* The glory of God is by all Chriſtians, confeſſedly, the end of mans creation, and ought to be made the end of his action; but herein appeareth the tranſcendent goodneſs of God, That no man can *act for his glory*, but he muſt alſo by the ſame actions conſult his own good, and be wiſe for himſelf. So that in truth there is no man ſerveth God for nothing, but in the ſame action, by, and in which he obeyeth God, he alſo conſulteth his own life, health, riches, ſucceſs in buſineſs, and whatſoever can contribute, not only to his eternal felicity, but to his felicity, and happineſs in this life. Now how wonderfully doth this ſpeak the love of God to the children of men? Every mans

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reason will tell him, that there is a duty of homage, and honour which is due from man unto God. God is our Creator, we are his creatures. In him we live, move and have our being, and equally depend upon him for our preservation, and sustentation from his Providence, as derive from him as our Creator and the first Author of beings to us. Now as it is in the power of any man in the cause, to prescribe the honour and homage which shall be grateful and acceptable to him; so undoubtedly it was in the power of God, and free to him, to have prescribed us an homage and service that should have impeached, and prejudiced, or some way disadvantaged us, as to our external felicity, and the accommodations of this life, which should make it sweet to us. But in this see the great *loving kindness of the Lord*, That no man can possibly at more advantage serve himself, and the good of his Family, or City, or Country, than by serving God, and indeavouring to square his whole converse, to the rule of Gods word; governing himself by the Scriptures, and the rules of life which it gives: nor doth God require any thing of us that is ungrateful to that true Reason which is in every man. All the commands of God, do but pinch us in the exercise of our *Lusts and Passions*: the exercise of which (if they have their liberty, and were not by a Divine Law restrained,) would have no better an effect, from their natural tendency than the imbittering of our lives, by aches and pains, and grievous diseases; by the rebellion, crosness, and undutifulness of our relations; by a liberty to injustice, fraud, deceit, and oppression. This is a great demonstration of Gods loving kindness, that in his rules for the government of us, he hath twisted our interest with his own, and made it necessary, for those who most consult his honour and glory, most to consult their own good and happiness, and that not only as to a life to come, but as to this life also.

Use 2. We may learn from hence the true reason, why the most of men *are cursed with the want of temporal blessings*; I say the most of men, for what I told you before must be remembred; that from these general rules, we must always except those particular causes, where God either for the punishment of *some sins* in his people, or for the trial of their faith and patience, (having reserved a better portion for them in the world to come) doth think fit to exercise them, with the denial of the sensible blessings of this life. But setting aside those cases, the general cause is,

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their not living up to that conformity, or ſquare, to the Divine rule to which they ought to live; but either failing in the duties of piety, and exerciſe of Religion, to which the Divine law bindeth them, or in the duties of *probity* and moral honeſty, juſtice, temperance, ſobriety, unity and amity, which the ſame Law doth require of them. What wonder is it to ſee the lazy ſluggard *poor?* Hath not God ſaid to him, Prov. 6. 9. *How long wilt thou ſleep, O ſluggard, when wilt thou ariſe out of ſleep?* v. 11. *So ſhall thy poverty come, as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.* Or to ſee Oppreſſors, and Gripers of their neighbour-poor: God hath told them, Prov. 10. 15. *The deſtruction of the poor is their poverty.* Or to ſee the penurious man grow poor; hath not God told us, *That to withhold more than is meet tendeth to poverty*, Prov. 11. 24? What wonder is it to ſee *Drunkards*, and *Gluttons poor*? Hath not God ſaid, *The Drunkard and Glutton ſhall come to poverty, and drouſineſs ſhall cloth a man with rags*, *Prov.* 23. 21? what wonder is it to ſee thoſe that are *companions of leud perſons, drunkards, adulterers, Gameſters*, &c. *grow poor*? Hath not God again ſaid, Prov. 28. 19. *That he who followeth after vain perſons ſhall have poverty enough*? O *Iſrael* (ſaith God by the Prophet *Hoſeah*) *Thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf, but in me is thy help.* Hoſ. 13. 9. it is true as to mens eternal ruine, but the Prophet there primarily ſpeaks of mens *deſtroying themſelves*, by being the cauſes of puniſhments in this life to themſelves: men deſtroy their own lives, healths, bodys, by drunkenneſs, gluttony, uncleanneſs; their eſtates by ſloth and luxury, the comforts of their own lives, by giving an unbridled liberty to their luſts, and paſſions, indulging the luſtings of their fleſh. The righteous God is not to be accuſed for any of theſe things. He hath given men a righteous law, which to their reaſon approveth it ſelf to be holy, ſpiritual, juſt, and good, but they are carnal, ſold unto ſin, ſlaves to their appetites, to their ſenſual faculties; and either ruine themſelves by their irreligious, or immoral behaviours, and doing thoſe things over, which if God had not by his ſevere threatnings in his word, hung a ſword of Divine Vengeance; yet in themſelves, and of their own nature they have a tendency to deſtroy life, health, to waſt and conſume eſtates, and to deprive them of all thoſe good things which may accommodate their lives, and make them ſweet, and pleaſant to them: and in the day of their affliction they muſt lay

the fault upon themselves, and excuse God in the motions of his Providence, acknowledging that it hath but fulfilled his word, and brought to pass the just threatnings of his word; nay not so only, but that it hath only brought natural things to pass in a natural order, and by natural ways and means; suffering poor sinful wretches, to walk in their own ways, and then penally producing the effects, the natural and proper effects of such courses, and giving them the fruit of their own doings, filling them with their own ways, and with that calamity and misery, which they like foolish people have pulled down upon their own heads, and could reasonably expect no other issue than what they meet with.

Use 3. In the last place, how doth this call upon all men after the example of holy *David* to make the *word of God a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their paths? Not to be conformed to the world, but transformed through the renewing of their minds, that they may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*, Rom. 12. 2. You remember I reduced the whole will of God concerning us to three heads: indeed two comprehend all, 1. *Piety towards God.* 2. *Probity* or honesty of conversation before men; now that last comprehendeth all acts of *justice*, and *charity, or kindness* and *Brotherly love.*

1. Let Magistrates command their Subjects, Masters of Families command their Families the fear of the Lord; and set examples of Religion before them; let them give people liberty to serve and worship God, and exhort and encourage them to do so. Let them restrain irreligion, and prophaneness; observe if those Nations, those Towns and Cities, those Families do not most thrive, amongst whom God is most strictly served and worshipped; if in those places where there is least of Religion, there be not also most beggery and poverty, like an armed man rushing in upon them. Hark what *Solomon* saith, Prov. 3. 13. *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.* v. 16. *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honour.*

2. Let every one maintain *justice and judgement*, giving to every one their due, according to the capacities in which they are: Magistrates truly dispense distributive justice, giving out rewards to *good men*, and inflicting punishments upon evil men, according

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to their merits; diſcountenancing all violence and oppreſſion, all luxury, and intemperance; in ſhort, all manner of ſin, and debauchery. Let private perſons give their due to their Superiors, their Inferiors and Equals: for what is that which God requires, but *to deal juſtly*? Let them be juſt in their dealings one with another, not cozening, and cheating, and defrauding one another.

3. Finally, Let all men according to the Apoſtles exhortation, *ſtudy to be quiet*, to forbear *biting, and devouring one another*; and indeavour to live peaceably and at unity, *following peace with all men*, and doing what good offices lie in their power each to another, according to the command of God. All theſe things now have promiſes of *ſpiritual bleſſings*, and eternal *happineſs of a life to come*; but if that be too far off, for men who *have not faith*, to be affected with, and moved by; there are, you ſee, other promiſes to incourage theſe things, even promiſes of ſenſible goods, *length of days, riches and honor*, and whatſoever our ſenſitive appetite deſireth, and calleth good, as grateful, and acceptable to it. Mal. 3. 10. *Bring you (ſaith God) all the tythes into the Storehouſe, that there may be meat in my Houſe; and prove me now herewith (ſaith the Lord of hoſts): If I will not open unto you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a bleſſing, that there ſhall not be room to receive it; and I will rebuke the devourer for your ſakes, and he ſhall not deſtroy the fruits of the ground, neither ſhall the vine caſt her fruit, before the time, in the field (ſaith the Lord of hoſts)*. The Prophet there mentioneth but one thing, *not robbing God of his tythes*, but certainly it is to be underſtood *ſynecdochically*.

We may certainly (by warrant of that Text) ſpeak to all people, all families, all perſons. *Worſhip God, ſet up the practice of Religion in all your Societies; do juſtly*, ſtudy peace and amity one with another, and try God herewith, if he will not open to you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a bleſſing, that there ſhall not be room enough to receive it. We complain that poverty is breaking in upon us, like an armed man; Trade faileth, Eſtates waſte, men every-where come to beggery. We muſt lay all the fault upon our ſelves; God is not altered in the courſe of his Providence; the change is in us. The world as to matters of juſtice, is grown but one *great cheat*: every one ſtudies by violence to oppreſs his neighbour, the greater devours the leſs, like the fiſh in the Sea: men in their Trades and dealings, do but ſtudy

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to circumvent one another, and to go beyond them in buyings and sellings, and bargains and exchanges. Men are grown generally like *Ishmaelites*, every mans tongue and hand is against his Brother, and his Brother's is against him again. God never commanded a blessing upon any part of the world that was of such a complexion. Let me conclude all with the Apostles words, 1 Pet. 3. 10, 11, 12. He hath been perswading in that Chapter, the relative duties of *Wives*, and *Husbands*, in the seven first verses; vers. 8. he speaks more generally, *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendring evil for evil, or railing for railing*, &c. Now mark the Argument he useth, vers. 10. *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips, that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it; for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.* And this is demonstrated by the frowns of his Providence upon them. The Apostle takes this out of *Psal.* 34. So that you see it is the Doctrine of both Testaments, and what you shall observe, God confirming every day in the issues of his Providence daily fulfilling his word. But I shall add no more upon this Observation, and also here shut up my discourses upon the *Observanda Providentiæ*. And hereafter pass on to the last part of my intended Discourse, concerning the συνοῦτα, the difficult things of Divine Providence; in the motions of which, it is true which the Apostle saith of *Pauls Epistles, there are many hard things, difficult to be understood*, which ignorant and unstable persons are very prone to wrest to their own destruction: to prevent which, God willing, I shall attempt something in my succeeding Discourses upon this Argument.

A

DISCOURSE

Concerning

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

PART. III.

Concerning the difficult things of Divine Providence.

Galat. III. 22.

But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin: that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe.

I Am now come to the last part of my designed Discourse. In my first, I asserted the Doctrine of *Divine Providence*, against ancient and modern *Atheists*. I opened it in the general and principal Acts of it. In the second, I shewed you the specialties of it. 2. Wherein you must stand still, and *admire* it in the depths, and unsearchable things of it. 3. I directed you how to make some observations upon the more ordinary and intelligible motions of it. I am now come to open some *hard Chapters*, in this great and excellent book; and to reconcile this great work of God, to his most *holy nature*, and that *infinite goodness, wisdom and truth*, which are inseparable from it. I take it to be a work worthy of a Divine, to make a *rationale divinorum operum*; to give a reasonable account of the Divine works, humbly adoring God in them, yet inqui-

inquiring into them, and that, *non tam ad mentis otium, quam ad cordis usum* (as *Nierembergius* saith) not so much for the exercise of our wits, as for the use of our souls. It advantageth the works of God to our souls, when they appear no other than reasonable to us; and I think the same Author speaketh well, when he saith, *Nullum puto consilium Divinum, cujus non aliqua ratio reddi potest, nullum cujus omnis reddatur, ita & inscrutabilia sunt divina opera, & digna ut scrutemur, & facilia*; that is, I do not think any Divine Counsel can be named, of which we may not give some reasonable account, though there be likewise none, of which we can give a perfect account; so as the Divine works, are at the same time both *unsearchable*, and also worthy and easie, *to be searched out*. I shall not so much as propound to my self or you, to resolve all the seeming *riddles* and *difficulties* of *Actual Providence*. I shall only discourse some of them, which seem most obvious, and readiest to stumble our thoughts; and those which I shall speak to, shall chiefly refer to these heads.

1. *The exhibition of the Covenant of works, after the establishment of the Eternal Covenant of Redemption and Grace; and the exhibition or tender of grace indefinitely to all, after the decree of election*, and the *fall of man*.

2. *The permission of sin, and so much sin in the world.*

3. *The punitive Providence of God.*

4. *The dispensation of the external, or internal & more effectual means of grace.*

I shall speak to divers seeming difficulties, that will fall under these four heads; and at this time begin with the first of these.

It was one of the first acts of Divine Providence that we read of, immediately succeeding the creation. Gen. 2. 15. *And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it, and to keep it; and the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou maist freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely dye.* Under that threatning is a *promise of life*, upon condition of *obedience*, as to the Law of God written in *Adams* heart. So to that positive Law given him for the trial of his *obedience*. I shall not engage my self deeply in the question, what *death* it is which God there threatneth to *Adam*. I am aware of the varieties of opinions: I take it for granted, that whatsoever falleth under the notion of *death* in Scripture is all

comprehended under that threatning, *In dying thou shalt dye* (saith the *Hebrew* phrase), which we translate, *Thou shalt surely dye*. The threatning mentioneth neither one death nor another, but is indefinite, and of the same force, as if *universal*, and it is accordingly used in Scripture, to signifie all kind of death, as *Ezek.* 18. and in many other places, and out of doubt there falleth under that threatning whatsoever was contrary to the felicity of *Adam* in that estate. I do therefore agree with the ancient and modern Divines, who understand death, *Corporal*, *Spiritual*, and *Eternal*, there threatned in case of disobedience, and life, *Corporal*, *Spiritual*, and *Eternal*, there promised in case of obedience. Now hence ariseth a great difficulty, there were two great *Acts of God, with relation to man*, passed before this Act of Providence. 1. *The decree of Election*, by which God had not only stated the number of those that should be saved, *but chosen us in him before the foundation of the world*, Ephes. 1. 6. 2. *The eternal Covenant of Redemption and Grace*. By which the salvation of man was setled, to be obtained not by *working*, but by *believing in him that justifieth the ungodly*; that is, not to be obtained by the merits of our own works, *but by the merits of Christ*, imputed to us for righteousnes, and to be by faith apprehended and applied. Now here ariseth the difficulty.

Quest. How it could consist with the *wisdom and truth of God, having thus in his eternal counsels resolved, that there should be no other name under heaven, no other way or means of salvation, but by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, to propound a way of salvation to be obtained by mens working and obedience to the Law of God, especially when he did aforeknow that man would break this first Covenant, and no man should be saved upon the terms of it.* That I might speak something to shew you the reasonableness of this motion I have made choice of this Text, in which you have,

1. An *assertion*. *The Scripture hath concluded all under wrath.*

2. The *end* or *reason of the thing asserted*, *That the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* A text much parallel to that, *Rom.* 11. 32. *He hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* This Text saith, the Scripture hath done it; that text saith, *God hath done it*, there's no contradiction in it, the Scriptures are the word of God; *if the Scripture hath concluded all under wrath, God hath done it.* Now how hath the Scripture done this? or how hath God done it, but

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by *first making man in his own image, writing his law in his heart*; then adding that *positive law*, forbidding him to *eat of the tree of forbidden fruit*; after this suffering him to eat, by which not *Adam* only, but all mankind (then in him) lost the Image of God, and all *were concluded under sin*: and to what purpose was all this? The text telleth us, *That the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to all that believe.* If you please, I shall make my whole discourse, but a demonstration of this Proposition.

Prop. *That God in infinite wisdom, by his Providence gave out the Law or Covenant of works, suffering the first man to fall; and all (in him) by the fall, to be concluded under wrath.* My business must be to shew you the exceeding reasonableness and wisdom of God in this dispensation. I shall open this to you in five or six particulars.

1. *It neither was, nor could be Gods design in it, that any one soul should be saved by the fulfilling of it, but that he might by it make way for the exhibition of the Covenant of Grace*, which is indeed what the text saith, *That the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* It is manifest that it was never any part of Gods design and counsel in his first exhibiting the Covenant of Works (or making it rather, for that was made immediately betwixt God and *Adam* in paradise), that any soul should be saved by it, for as to this the Apostles words are true, *Gal.* 3. 21. *If there had been a law, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.* The Apostle in that text may be speaking of the law given to man in his lapsed estate; but I say it is as true concerning the law given in the estate of innocency. *But why could not the law give righteousness?* As to our lapsed estate the Apostle tells you, *Rom.* 8. 3. *Because it was made weak through our flesh.* But this cannot be said of man in his estate of innocency and original integrity, he then certainly had a *posse non peccare*; but then the eternal Counsel of God hindred, who had fixed the salvation of man upon another foot, having from eternity *set apart the son of his love, for the head of his elect, and chosen us in him, and ordained mans salvation by faith in him.* The law given in innocency, in respect of it self might have given life, what should have hindred? Eternal life was then the gift of God, and God had annexed the promise of it to mans obedience; but it is as true, that if we respect the eternal Coun-

sels

sels of God, having *fore-ordained* men to salvation upon a *Covenant of grace* made with the Son of his love; even that law could not give life, it was not consistent with our being *chosen in Christ*. In short, the power in the law to give life, may be considered in a threefold habitude or respect.

1. *With respect to the law it self.* Thus the law could have given life, if man had kept it; the law given to *Adam* could in this sense have given life, the law afterward upon *Mount Sinai* could have in this respect have given life. *If thou wilt enter into life* (saith our Saviour) *keep the Commandments*. As to our lapsed estate, the Apostle saith no more than, *that it is weak through our flesh*; that is, because we are not able to keep it; or else, secondly,

2. *The law may be considered with respect unto man*; and he is considerable, either in his *primitive state of innocency*, or in his *lapsed estate*: if we consider man in the *first estate*, the law again *might have given life*; for it was the perfect rule of God at that time concerning man, and man had a power to keep it so, as nothing hindred, but that the law might have given life: but indeed if we consider man in his *lapsed estate*, the case is quite otherwise; for man *was now made weak through his flesh*, and unable to keep that law, which yet approved it self to his reason in that state, as holy, spiritual, just, and good.

3. But (thirdly) the law may be considered *in its power to give life, with respect to Gods counsels and purposes, fixed concerning the end and means of mans salvation from all eternity*; and so the law never had a power to give life, that is, it never was any ordination of God in order to such an end, nor ever was designed by God as an effectual means in order to that end: nor indeed is it possible that it should, for then it had been possible that the counsel of God could have been frustrated of its intendment, for never yet was any saved by any works of their own: But the *giving of the law to man in innocency, was not*, nor could be intended by God further than as a proper mean for the exhibition of the Covenant of Grace: and for this it was so proper, that upon this *Hypothesis*, that the *elect* were (as the Apostle saith) *chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world*, and that a *Covenant of Grace*, was made for mens salvation through faith, and believing in Christ; yet it is very difficult to imagine how the Providence of God could have brought this about otherwise, than by first

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making a Covenant of Works with man, then suffering him to fall and violate it, and so be concluded under sin and wrath; I say it is hard to imagine, how otherwise God could have given out the promise to them that should believe in *Jesus Christ*. This I shall yet further open to you in five or six particulars. To this end I shall intreat you to consider,

1. *That man was created in a state of innocency.* The Scripture saith so, *that in the image of God he created man*, and that is expounded to us by the Apostle, to have been in *knowledg*, *righteousness*, and *holiness*; and indeed it was impossible, that he should come out of the hands of God, other than *holy* and *righteous*. Divines say, the Image of God lay in Righteousness and Holiness, and that dominion over the Creatures, with which God invested him: the last indeed was not necessary, but coming immediately out of the hands of an holy God, it was necessary that he should be created in *righteousness* and *holiness*. God saw all *that he had made that it was good*, good according to the nature. Every inanimate and sensitive creature had a goodness suitable to its nature, a natural goodness; man must also have a goodness suitable to his being, and considering him a rational creature, he must have a moral goodness, a purity, and integrity, a freedom from any spots or stains of sin, and so consequentially from any guilt of sin. *God made man upright*: this is a confessed principle, and needeth no further enlargement of discourse.

2. Man in this state was *not capable of salvation in that way wherein God had foreordained the salvation of men*, viz. by a *Redeemer*: *the whole need not a physician, but the sick*; men must be *lost*, before they are *found*; they must be captives, before they are capable of *Redemption*; they must be *unrighteous*, before they can be capable of a being *made righteous*. Christ came not (as himself telleth us) to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

3. *Man could no other way become lost, than by some actual transgression*: The first man could have no original guiltiness. We are guilty by imputation, as we were all in the first man, and sinned in him, and fell with him; but *Adam* being the first man, could derive no guild from any progenitor. We become guilty by *traduction*, deriving guild from our immediate parents: we were conceived in sin, and in iniquity did our mother bring us forth, and so we *were by nature the children of wrath*. But *Adam* came immediately

mediately out of the hands of God, and therefore must necessarily be without *spot* or *wrinkle*.

4. From hence followeth in the fourth place, *the necessity of a law to be given unto man in his state of innocency: For* (saith the Apostle) *where there is no law, there is no transgression*, sin being the transgression of the law. Now this Law, with the promise annexed to it, was the Covenant of Works on Gods part; and the restipulation on mans part must be presumed, or man had been a transgressor before the fall, by a rebellion to the Divine Will: and this formally maketh up the *Covenant of Works*, God promising him life upon condition of his Obedience, and man accepting the promise, and agreeing to the terms, or condition of life imposed on him. Now God having given this Law, and made this Covenant, man by the violation of it became guilty, a debtor to the Justice of God, and so capable of a *Redemption*, a *Remission*, and *Justification*.

5. I desire you to consider, *That the Covenant of Grace, and promise by faith on Gods part, could not possibly have been made good, without the destruction of the first Covenant of Works, and the promise of life made upon that:* this is that which the Apostle saith in my text, *That the promise by faith of Jesus might be given to them that believe.* I pray observe, here are three things to be considered, 1. *The matter of the promise.* 2. *The means by which the promise is to be obtained.* 3. *The objects of it.* The promise intended, is doubtless the promise of eternall life, so often called in Scripture, (as being indeed the great and most valuable promise), what is the means of obtaining it? On Gods part it must be given out, on mans part it must be *received by faith*, for it is *given to them that believe*, and it is therefore called the promise by *faith in Jesus Christ*. Now the *promise of life by works*, under the first Covenant, was wholly inconsistent with this promise of being saved by *faith in Christ*. Though the first Covenant comprehended a faith in God, as being a piece of that internal homage, which every soul oweth to God; yet it could not comprehend a faith in Christ as our Mediator, there being no need of a Saviour, till we were in danger, nor of a Mediator, till we were become transgressors? How therefore was it possible that the promise of faith in Christ to those who believe in him should be given out, till first the *Covenant of Works* was both given out, and also violated? Though the law by the promise of faith in Christ, was not de-

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ſtroyed ſo far forth, as it was a directive and obligatory rule of life and converſation unto all; yet ſo far as it was a *Covenant of life*, it muſt be both given out, and alſo deſtroyed, that the promiſe of faith might be given out.

6. In the laſt place, I deſire you to conſider, *That as on Gods part, the promiſe of life by faith in Chriſt, was inconſiſtent with the promiſe of life, upon the doing of the works of the law:* ſo on our part, *we ſhould never have come to Chriſt that we might have life, if we had not firſt been concluded under wrath:* And this will appear to every intelligent ſoul, that will but conſider, *That the going out of the ſoul unto Chriſt for life, is a diſclaimer of its own righteouſneſs*; and a very great piece of *ſelf-denial*, to which the ſoul will never move naturally, but muſt ſee it ſelf conſtrained to it by neceſſity, *Iſa.* 57. 10. *Thou haſt found the life of thy hand, therefore thou wert not grieved*: ſo long as a man ſeeth help in himſelf, and thinks that he hath found life in his own hands, ſo long he is not grieved, not at all concerned as to his eternal ſtate: And this is the true reaſon why you ſee the greateſt brokenneſs of heart, and ſenſe of ſin, yea and the greateſt holineſs of life too in thoſe men that yet look to be ſaved by faith in Jeſus Chriſt; for our *free-will* men that maintain a power in man to believe, and repent, or to keep the Law of God perfectly; they have ſaid, they have found life in their own hands, and then I hope they have none but themſelves to blame, if they miſs, and come ſhort of it; if they do not repent, and turn unto God to day, they can do it to-morrow. It was neceſſary as on Gods part, in order to his giving out of the promiſe of faith in Chriſt, and exhibition of the Covenant of Grace to the world: ſo alſo on our part, in order to our acceptation, and taking hold of any ſuch Covenant, and the application of our ſouls unto God, upon the terms of that Covenant, for the ſure mercies of it; that there ſhould firſt be a Covenant of Works made with man, and a law of works given unto him; for had there been no ſuch Covenant made, no ſuch Law given, man could not have broken, and violated it; and if he had not violated, and broken it, he could not have been a tranſgreſſor, he could not have been a loſt ſinner, and conſequentially had needed no Saviour; nor would man have ever been perſwaded to have gone out of himſelf, and to have accepted of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt for his righteouſneſs, had he not firſt been rendred in a forlorn, deſperate, and hopeleſs condition, without Application unto Chriſt.

Use 1. For the practical Application of what you have heard now in this discourse. *This*, in the first place, *should mind us, not to be hasty to deny, nor too forward to stumble at some things in the dispensations of God, which at first seem to us hard to be understood.* Who can find out God, or search out the Almighty unto perfection? I do not know any thing that looketh more inconsistently in appearance to us, at our first view of it, than this; That God should from eternity fix the salvation of man upon a Covenant of Grace, and write it in his book, *That there should be salvation in no other, than in Jesus Christ, nor any other name given under heaven amongst men, whereby they might be saved: that he who believeth should be saved, and he who believed not should be damned*, for all these things were decrees in the rolls of eternity, or they could never have been *Revelations of Gods Will in Scripture*, Heb. 10. 5, 6, 7. and *Psal.* 40. 7. *In the volume of Gods book it was written of Christ, that he should come into the world, and do the Will of God, relating to the salvation of man:* I say, that God should thus setle mans salvation in the order of its causes, and upon the terms of free-grace, the merit and satisfaction of Christ and Faith in him; and yet when mankind was created, God should treat him upon a Law of Works, and make a Covenant with him for life and salvation, upon condition of his perfect obedience both to the Law written at that time upon his heart, and this positive precept *of not eating of the tree of forbidden fruit*; yet there is nothing clearer in Scripture, than that God did do this: for to say that these were second thoughts about mans salvation, when he was lapsed and fallen, were to blaspheme by attributing change of mind and purpose to God, and a successive knowledg of things, such as we have upon the events, so ascribing humane imperfections to a most holy God. If God from all eternity did settle the business of mans salvation (as the Apostle saith he did), *Ephes.* 1. 4, 5, 6, 7. *Chousing us in him before the foundation of the world* (that is, in Christ, as *ver.* 3.) *that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace:* and this, as *vers.* 8. *was the mystery of his will according to his*

good

good pleasure which he had purposed in himself; sure we are, he created man in a state, that was not capable of these spiritual blessings, until he was fallen from it, and that God according to that holy and guiltless state, wherein he made man, did first stipulate with him in a Covenant of Works, and offered him life upon his doing the Law of God. I would gladly know of those, who so flutter with their little ratiocinations, about the *seriousness of Gods actings in his offers of grace*, and would make us believe that God doth not *serio agere*, act seriously in calling men to *believe* and *repent*, unless there were a possibility of salvation for them all; or unless Christ intentionally dyed for all, or men had a power in their lapsed estate to do things spiritually good; I say, I would fain know of them, whether God was in earnest or no with *Adam*, when he promised him life upon the Covenant of Works. It is most certain, that he either never intended that *Adam*, or any of his posterity should go to Heaven that way, or that he was frustrated of his intention (which God cannot be). If he never intended that any should be that way saved, I would know of them whether God was serious or no with *Adam* in such a proposal of life unto him; if they can find out an answer in this case, it will also serve in the other. God was serious with *Adam* in the making of the *Covenant of Works* with him, serious with respect unto his own end, which was not that any should be saved by the fulfilling of that Covenant, which he knew none would, but that it should be as a *School-master to lead us to Christ* (as the Apostle speaketh of the Law contained in Ordinances) and introductive to the exhibition of that better Covenant which God had established with the Son of his Love, and upon which he had fixed the salvation of the Elect.

Use 2. We may learn from hence, *That it is consistent enough with the holiness of God, to require things of persons, which it is not his Will of purpose that they should do*; and to make conditional promises to them, who he knoweth will never fulfil the condition. These are two things which some make a great pudder with, that they might establish their *universalities*, and obtain against the *Election of Grace*. They think that if God had determined the certain number of those who should be saved, or for whom Christ dyed; others should

not be called to, or required to believe, or repent, nor a promiſe of life and ſalvation, and life made to them in caſe of their repenting and believing; for they apprehend it inconſiſtent with the truth and holineſs of God, to require that of men, which it is not his will or purpoſe they ſhould do, or to offer them *life* and *ſalvation* upon a condition, from the performance of which they are precluded by the purpoſe of God. We muſt adhere to this, that there is nothing contingent to God, no event which he did not from eternity foreknow, and therefore foreknow, becauſe he willed either to effect, or to permit it. We can neither allow of any ignorance to be imputed unto God, nor any ſucceſſion in his knowledg, nor apprehend it poſſible that God ſhould from all eternity know who would believe and repent (which none could without his ſpecial grace) without willing that grace to them, by vertue of which they ſhould put forth theſe ſaving acts; and therefore ſuch to whom he did not by his eternal purpoſe will thoſe habits of grace, muſt be paſſed over. But then ſay they, who have other apprehenſions; How is it conſiſtent with the truth and holineſs of God to call all men to believe, and to repent, and to promiſe them eternal life and ſalvation, upon the terms of faith and repentance? We ask them how *it was conſiſtent with the truth and holineſs of God*, to require of *Adam* under the Covenant of Works, *not to eat of the tree of forbidden fruit, and to promiſe him life upon his not eating thereof*; when as it is plain, that God had purpoſed *to permit him to eat thereof, and foreknew that he would eat thereof*, and never intended that *Adam*, or any of his poſterity ſhould come to Heaven, by the fulfilling of that Covenant. But then ſay they, to what purpoſe are theſe Precepts, or Promiſes? Divers anſwers are given by Divines, as to that queſtion concerning thoſe who are called to *repent*, and to *believe*, which poſſibly will hereafter fall in my way to touch upon. At preſent, as to this purpoſe it is enough to ſay, *Gods end in making the Covenant of Works with* Adam, *was to make way for the publication of the Covenant of Grace*. For the exhibition and publication of which to the world, there was no room, until the Law and Covenant of Works was violated, and man that was created in the Image of God, and ſtate of Holineſs, had fallen from that ſtate, and become concluded under wrath.

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In the mean time obſerve, here is a *precept given*, which God had never intended, ſhould be obeyed; a conditional promiſe made, from which God never intended that any man ſhould have any advantage: and in that appeareth the advantage of this inſtance, for in the calls of the Goſpel to faith and repentance, though the Lord hath told us, *Many are called, and few are choſen*; Although all to whom the Goſpel is Preached, be not the choſen of God, and within his purpoſe of eternal life and ſalvation: yet ſome are, and ſome ſay, *Non proprie & per ſe reprobos hortatos eſſe ad fidem & pœnitentiam, ſed per concomitantiam, quatenus electis externa ſocietate permiſcentur*; That is, that reprobates are only called to faith and repentance, as they are mixed together with the elect. But here *Adam*, and in him all mankind were called to a fulfilling of the *Covenant of Works*, and *life* was upon that condition promiſed to them all, when-as yet it was never Gods purpoſe and intendment, that any of them ſhould fulfil it, or that way obtain everlaſting life.

Uſe 3. In the laſt place my diſcourſe upon this argument *may let you ſee, how uniformly the Providence of God in the converſion, and bringing home to God, of a particular ſinner, moveth to its motions and workings, in order to the general publication of the Covenant of Grace*, and the way of ſalvation through him unto the world. The way of God in making known of Jeſus Chriſt to a particular ſoul, is ordinarily firſt by the *law to humble the ſoul, and to conclude it under wrath*, and then to open to it a door of hope: and indeed this is but a reaſonable working of Providence, and exceedingly ſuitable to the principles of reaſon, and humane nature. What ſignifies the news of a Redeemer unto him, who either is no captive, or is not ſenſible that he is; the news of a Saviour to him, that apprehendeth not himſelf loſt, or to ſtand in need of any ſalvation? God therefore ordinarily in the converſion of a ſinner, layeth the Law to him, ſheweth him what God hath required of him, how much he is a debtor to God, how much he lyes open to wrath, and is ſubject to the curſe: this letteth him ſee what need he hath of ſalvation by a Redeemer, and induceth him to be willing to go unto Chriſt for life. Now this motion and working of Providence, as to particular ſouls bears a juſt proportion to Gods firſt Revelation of Chriſt unto the world. God firſt gave unto *Adam*

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a Law of Works, and made a Covenant with him, and then permitted him to violate this Law, to break this Covenant, and then discovers the *Covenant of Grace and Redemption*, which to this time lay hidden with God, although as to the paction of it, it was eternal. And hence also appears an easie answer to that question, whether men and women unregenerated, be under the *Covenant of Works*, or *under the Covenant of Grace*; that all men since the fall of *Adam*, are not under the dispensation of the *Covenant of Works*, but under the dispensation of *the Covenant of Grace* is out of doubt, for the Covenant of Works expired with *Adams* fall. But thus far they are under the Covenant of Works, *viz.* That there is no salvation for them, but by keeping the whole Law in thought, word, and deed, which is a state sad and miserable enough, it being that which no man in his lapsed estate is able to do. *Adam* indeed might have done it, none since the fall can do it; and from hence followeth the impossibility of salvation for any soul, that is out of the Lord Jesus Christ. The law they cannot keep, so as from the fulfilling of that to expect salvation; and whereas (as the Apostle telleth us) *what the law could not do, because it was made weak through our flesh, that God himself hath done, sending his son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and condemning sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us*; they have no part nor portion in this matter, no state nor interest in Christ, but are without Christ, and consequently during their present state incapable of any lively hope. But this is enough to have spoken to this first difficulty, and the inferences by way of Application to be made from it.

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SERMON XXXVI.

Acts XVII. 30.

But now God commandeth all men every-where to Repent.

I Am endeavouring to expound to you ſome of the hard Chapters of Divine Providence; Theſe times juſtifying that to be true of the book of Providence, which the Apoſtle *Peter* ſaith of St. *Pauls Epiſtles*, 2 Pet. 3. 16. *There are in it ſome things hard to be underſtood, which they that are unlearned and unſtable, wreſt unto their own deſtruction.* It is truly ſaid of *Tertullian*, *Deus omnium conditor, nihil non ratione providet, diſpoſuit & ordinavit, nihil non tractari intelligique voluit*; that God the maker of all things, hath rationally diſpoſed and ordered all things, and would have us to underſtand all his works. It is moſt certain, that all the Lords ways are equal; and it is a noble employ to ſtudy the equality and reaſonableneſs of them: it may be ſometimes we ſhall wade beyond our ſtature, and be forced to cry out *O the depth*; but I think that grave Ancient ſaid true, that told us, *That the Counſels of God do ſo exceed our capacity, that in ſome particulars they yet wonderfully accommodate themſelves to our intellectuals:* and men might underſtand more of the reaſonableneſs of the motions of Divine Providence, if they would bring to their obſervation not ſo much *diſcutiendi acumen*, as *diſcendi pietatem*, acuteneſs of wit to quarrel, as an humble deſire to learn of God, and to underſtand his will. We are prone for the directing of our conceptions of God, to make to our ſelves images graven with the tools of *philoſophy* and *humane reaſon*, and then to bow to them. Whereas could we be content to regulate our Philoſophy, ſo far as it relateth to God by the rules of his word, and not to think to crook the word of God to our Philoſophy, many rough ways would be made plain, and matters of queſtion quickly

quickly-rendred *out of queſtion.* I am ſpeaking to ſuch φαινόμενα of difficulty as ariſe to conſiderate ſouls, from the conſideration of the motions of Providence, *relating both to the Covenant of works, and that of Grace.* I ſpake to one in my laſt exerciſe. I now proceed to a ſecond, which I ſhall ſtate thus.

Queſt. *Suppoſing the Covenant of Redemption and Grace made betwixt the eternal Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, not to have been general for all men: nor incertain for perſons that ſhould be ſo, and ſo qualified: and that the blood of this Covenant was intentionally ſhed, in proportion to the nature of the Covenant: How it could conſiſt with the truth of God to offer ſalvation to all in the miniſtry of his word upon the Goſpel-terms of faith and repentance; or to what end it ſhould be done.*

Here are two or three things here ſuppoſed, which by a great many will not be granted.

1. We ſuppoſe here (firſt) *A Covenant made from eternity betwixt God the Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt relating to the ſalvation of the children of men.* This, I know, ſome will not underſtand, but the Scripture ſpeaketh plainly. Now to *Abraham and his ſeed were the promiſes made,* he ſaith not *to ſeeds as many, but as of one, and to thy ſeed which was Chriſt,* Gal. 3. 16. Iſa. 42. 6.——*and I will give thee for a Covenant to the people;* hence Chriſt was called *a ſurety of a better Covenant;* he was both the *party Covenanting,* and the *ſurety of the Covenant.* God the Father taking the word of his Son, for the fulfilling of the matter of the Covenant, both what was to be done by himſelf, upon which account it was called a *Covenant of Redemption;* and by us, with reſpect to which it is called the *Covenant of Grace:* God in and by it relaxing the rigour of the Law, which required perſonal ſatisfaction to Divine Juſtice, from the perſons offending, and a perfect performance of the whole Law; and accepted the ſatisfaction given to Divine Juſtice, by the nature offending, hypoſtatically united to the perſon that was the Son of God, and accepting from us ſincerity, inſtead of perfect obedience; the ſincerely willing mind, inſtead of the perfect deed: Such a Covenant we ſuppoſe and believe to have been made.

2. We believe *it not made for all,* but conformably to the purpoſe of *Election;* if it had been made for all, we could not underſtand but that all men muſt be ſaved.

3. Nor can we think it was made for an *uncertain number*; but as there are individual names written in the Book of Life, ſo we believe the ſame concerning the rolls *of this Covenant.* The Lord (as the Apoſtle tells us) *knoweth who are his.* Chriſt was not *Sponſor incerti fœderis*, a ſurety of an incertain, but of a certain Covenant. Some would make Chriſts Covenant with his Father, not to have been for theſe, or thoſe perſons, but indefinitely for thoſe that *ſhould believe*, and ſo to have been conditional. But certainly no conſiderate Chriſtian can allow this, who obſerveth that amongſt men, nothing but *ignorance of future contingencies*, is the cauſe of incertain, and conditional bargains: the Parent that dieth and gives his Child a Portion conditionally, that he or ſhe marrieth ſo and ſo, or be ſubject to ſuch or ſuch Governors, would have left out that condition, if he or ſhe had certainly known what the Child would have done; and it ſeems to us ſtrangely to derogate from the eternal perfection of the Divine Being, in point of *Knowledge*, ſo much as to fancy, that *God the Father and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, (who both from eternity knew who would, or would not repent and believe, and needs muſt know it, becauſe they could do neither but by vertue of ſpecial grace infuſed by, and derived from God,) ſhould make a *Covenant* each with other; that ſuch or ſuch perſons (who they knew would not repent nor believe,) if they believed and repented, ſhould have a ſhare in the ſatisfaction and death of Chriſt.

4. We do ſuppoſe and believe *the blood of the Covenant* (that is, the blood of Jeſus Chriſt) was *intentionally poured forth, according to the Covenant*, and for the perſons concerned in it. The blood of Chriſt is called the *blood of the Covenant*, *Zech.* 9. 11. *Heb.* 10. 29. *Heb.* 13. 20. and the *Antitype* to thoſe ancient types of the blood of Beaſts, which was ſo called, *Exod.* 24. 8. So that we think it a very unreaſonable aſſertion, to extend *the blood of the Covenant*, beyond the perſons concerned in the Covenant.

But yet notwithſtanding all this, there is nothing more evident in the iſſues of Divine Providence, than that this Covenant is held out to all indefinitely. *Mar.* 16. 15. Chriſts commiſſion to his Apoſtles runs thus, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature: He that believeth, and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* Here both the benefit of the New Covenant, eternal life, and ſalvation is offered to all; and the terms, believing, and being baptized are alſo pro-

pounded unto all; and according to that direction, and commission is all our Preaching. Now hence ariseth the difficulty: If there be not a possibility of salvation for all men, if they all be not within the verge of the Covenant: If Christ hath not died for all, why is the Gospel preached to every creature? how can it consist *with the truth and honour of that God who cannot lie*, by his Ministers to tell men, that if they will but *repent, and believe, they shall be saved*? To what end is the Gospel preached unto them? To which I answer,

1. That the Gospel only asserteth *the infallible connexion of faith and salvation.* What saith the Gospel? *He that believeth, shall be saved*; and will any say that a believer shall be damned, or did ever any penitent and believing soul perish? if there had, then indeed we might have quarrelled at the truth of God: but God will be true, though all men be found liars. What though ten thousand be told, and have it rung in their Ears, *That he who believeth shall be saved*, and but ten of those ten thousand should believe, provided that they be saved, God I hope is true, and what he hath said, is to a tittle made good. But you will say, why then are all told, if they believe they shall be saved. The Minister of the Gospel may go to every particular soul, and say to him or her, if thou repentest and believest thou shalt be saved. I answer,

2. God is pleased *to hide from his Ministers, his secret counsels concerning the salvation of individual souls.* They therefore may, and must say, *whosoever believeth shall be saved*; and God will confirm in Heaven whatsoever they deliver on Earth: and by vertue of this Commission they may say to every individual soul, *Believe and thou shalt be saved*; they know not who are *ordained to life*, and shall have effectual grace bestowed upon them inabling them to believe, but they know the general proposition of the Gospel is true. But still you will say, why hath God by his Providence so ordered it, to what end should the Providence of God order the *publication and tender of the Covenant of Grace* to a greater number than are concerned in it.

3. What if we should say, *It is (O Father) so because it pleaseth thee*, and be forced here to cry out with the great Apostle, Rom. 9. 33. *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!* vers. 34. *For who hath known the mind of the*

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Lord, or who hath been his Counſellor? Who is able to give a juſt account of Gods deſigns and intentions, to what purpoſe he doth things? It is enough for us to know that God doth them, and that God may do them, and there is no unrighteouſneſs with him if he doth do it. We ought to believe that God hath wiſe ends in what he doth, though we are not able to find out what they be. Yet it may not be amiſs to tell you what Divines do ſay in the caſe, though they cannot by *ſearching find out God, nor find out the Almighty unto perfection.*

1. There are thoſe that ſay, *that Reprobates are only called to faith and repentance, as they are mixed with the elect,* and the exhortations reach them only by way of concomitancy; and poſſibly it may be doubted, if there were any ſociety, or company of people in the world, amongſt whom there were not any ordained to everlaſting life; whether God would at all ſend his Goſpel to them, or direct any of the Meſſengers of his word to go and call them to repentance. God incouraging *Paul*, *Act.* 18. 10. to preach the Goſpel undauntedly at *Corinth*, addeth this, *for I have much people in this City.* Now ſuppoſing a City in which God had no people, it might be much queſtioned whether God would. Certain it is that the Apoſtle telleth us, that God hath given *Paſtors and Teachers for the perfecting of the ſaints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the body of Chriſt*, Epheſ. 4. 11, 12. I remember that when the Prophet *Eliſha* was ſent for to *Jehoſaphat, Jehoram and the King of Edom*, when they were in their diſtreſs for want of water, (you have the ſtory 2 *Kings* 3. 13.) *Eliſha ſaith to the King of Iſrael* (who was a wicked King) *what have I to do with thee?* verſ. 14. *Were it not that I regard the preſence of Jehoſophat, the King of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor ſee thee.* I am very apt to think God ſpeaketh ſo to every one whom he hath paſſed over in his eternal purpoſe, and knoweth that they will not repent and believe; Were it not for the ſake of his *elect*, with whom theſe men are mixed, God would never regard them, nor look to them in his Goſpel diſpenſations: but as the *Gardiner* watereth the *weeds* amongſt the *herbs*, becauſe he cannot at preſent well pluck them up; ſo God having reſolved that the Tares ſhould be ſuffered amongſt the Wheat, till the great harveſt watereth them with the dew of the Goſpel; *pariter adeunt, pariter audiunt* (as *Auguſtine* ſaith in another caſe) they living amongſt the elect of God, hear the words that are ſpo-

pounded unto all; and according to that direction, and commission is all our Preaching. Now hence ariseth the difficulty: If there be not a possibility of salvation for all men, if they all be not within the verge of the Covenant: If Christ hath not died for all, why is the Gospel preached to every creature? how can it consist *with the truth and honour of that God who cannot lie*, by his Ministers to tell men, that if they will but *repent, and believe, they shall be saved*? To what end is the Gospel preached unto them? To which I answer,

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1. There are those that say, *that Reprobates are only called to faith and repentance, as they are mixed with the elect,* and the exhortations reach them only by way of concomitancy; and possibly it may be doubted, if there were any society, or company of people in the world, amongst whom there were not any ordained to everlasting life; whether God would at all send his Gospel to them, or direct any of the Messengers of his word to go and call them to repentance. God incouraging *Paul, Act.* 18. 10. to preach the Gospel undauntedly at *Corinth,* addeth this, *for I have much people in this City.* Now supposing a City in which God had no people, it might be much questioned whether God would. Certain it is that the Apostle telleth us, that God hath given *Pastors and Teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,* Ephes. 4. 11, 12. I remember that when the Prophet *Elisha* was sent for to *Jehosaphat, Jehoram and the King of Edom,* when they were in their distress for want of water, (you have the story 2 *Kings* 3. 13.) *Elisha saith to the King of Israel* (who was a wicked King) *what have I to do with thee?* vers. 14. *Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehosophat, the King of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.* I am very apt to think God speaketh so to every one whom he hath passed over in his eternal purpose, and knoweth that they will not repent and believe; Were it not for the sake of his *elect,* with whom these men are mixed, God would never regard them, nor look to them in his Gospel dispensations: but as the *Gardiner* watereth the *weeds* amongst the *herbs,* because he cannot at present well pluck them up; so God having resolved that the Tares should be suffered amongst the Wheat, till the great harvest watereth them with the dew of the Gospel; *pariter adeunt, pariter audiunt* (as *Augustine* saith in another case) they living amongst the elect of God, hear the words that are spo-

ken from God to them; the Ministers of the Gospel they know them not, and therefore cannot distinguish; and it hath pleased the wise God so to order it. And this answer indeed almost taketh away the subject of the question, for then it is as it were by accident only, that they are called to. The Elect are those spoken to, others only as they are in their company; as a Father intending only to give good counsel to his own children, may yet give it to others, who accidentally are in their company.

2. But there are others who think, *That God doth this, that he might declare to all what is their duty*; *Alii vocantur, ad officium solum, alii etiam ad beneficium*, Spanhemius. A Creditor may, I hope, mind his Debtor of his debt, though he knoweth that he is not able to pay a tenth part of it, and be resolved never to lend him mony to do it; and so in calling upon him cannot be supposed so much as to intend his own payment, and satisfaction; for none intendeth what he knoweth is impossible. This is an answer which our learned *Pemble* gives: but this answer doth not satisfie some other very learned men; for what is it to exhort another, but to declare his duty to him; and to say that the end why God declareth unto Reprobates their duty, is that he might declare their duty to them, is something uncouth, for *idem non est finis sui ipsius*: The question is, what end the wise God can have in declaring their duty to them in, and by such exhortations.

3. It is therefore possibly better answered, *That God doth this for maintaining discipline, and government in the world.* It is but a common observation, that the Preaching of the Gospel generally restraineth, and civilizeth those, or very many of those whose hearts are not yet changed by it, and converted to the obedience of the Gospel. Take in your eye but two places, one where there is no Preaching of the Gospel, or none which truly deserveth that name; another place where the Gospel is Preached duly, daily and lively; and observe if the generality of the people in the later place, be not strangely more civilized than those of the other Town or City. So that God by the Preaching of the Gospel to all, and the work of his Providence in so ordering and disposing it, though he doth not intend the salvation of Reprobates; yet may have a wise and excellent end for the good of the world, in bridling and restraining the outragious, and unbridled lusts of such men; so that the world is not such a heap of confusion, such a place of universal disorder, as it would

be

be, were it not for the influence of the indefinite, and universal Preaching of the Gospel amongst them; nor is this an end at all unworthy of a wise and holy God, as well with relation to his own glory, which is impeached by the exorbitancies of mens lusts, as with reference to the good of *humane society*, for which (as I have all along shewed you in these Discourses) our good God in the motions of his Providence sheweth a great kindness, and this may be said to be another end of Gods, which also he doth generally obtain.

It is said by some, That God causeth the Gospel to be Preached unto some, *that they might be without excuse*. The Apostle telleth us, *That the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power, and God-head, so that they are without excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God*, Rom. 1. 20. he speaketh of the Heathens; and why may not we say of others, that the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is Preached unto many, and the riches of Divine Grace displayed before them, *so that they are without excuse*, while they continue in impenitency and unbelief: we may say of them as the Apostle saith of the Jews, *Have they not heard*, Rom. 10. 18. *did they not know? God hath stretcht forth his hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people.* vers. 21. I know *Arminius* doth object against this answer, telling us, this *cannot be Gods end in sending his Gospel, for exhortations, to faith and repentance, do not of themselves render persons without excuse*; but this is added to the nature of them. But this reason also would prove that the faith and obedience of the elect is not intended by God, for their obedience also is added to the exhortations. But enough is spoken upon this *Argument*, as to such who have an ear open to receive an answer. Supposing that God hath chosen but some to eternal life, that Christ hath made a Covenant but for some, nor intentionally dyed for more than his Father had chosen in him, and given to him: yet God might cause the Gospel to be preached unto all the world, and have very wise ends in the doing of it. So as that the universality of the call to *faith and repentance*, is no argument either *against the election of grace*, or for an *uncertain Covenant*, no nor yet for an *universal redemption*.

And from hence also an easie solution may be made of another appearing difficulty. It is certain, according to the letter of my

Text,

Text, *That now God commandeth every man to repent.* How can this be?

Quest. 2. *Supposing that a man or woman hath of himself no power to believe, or to repent; how standeth it with the sincerity and truth of God to command them to repent or believe; or how will it stand with Divine Justice, to condemn them for not repenting, or believing?* For this general command of men to repent, and to believe, is not only made use of to destroy the *Doctrine of Election* and the *certainty of the Covenant of Grace*, but also to destroy *special and effectual Grace.*

My business is not at present to establish those great truths which are abundantly spoken to by others; and I have elsewhere, and at other times spoken abundantly to them: but only to vindicate the Providence of God, upon the supposal of the truth of them, and to shew you that the Universality of the Ministerial Gospel-call maketh no argument against them. I say then, supposing man in his lapsed state to have no power to *repent*, yet it is consistent enough with the *truth* and *seriousness* of God, with his *purity* and *holiness*, or any other attribute of his perfection, to call *all men to repent*; neither doth such his call of them imply any such *natural, innate* power in them.

1. What if man in his lapsed estate by nature hath no power to any action that is spiritually good, not to *believe, nor repent*; *yet is it not his duty to do both, and had not our proparent a power given him of God to do whatsoever was necessary in order to his eternal salvation?* His duty is, because God commandeth it; my Text saith, *he commandeth now all men to repent*: and certainly in *Adam* both he, and all of us had a power to do whatsoever was the will of God as to his own, and our salvation, in that estate wherein God created him, and us in him. Hath God lost his right to demand his due, because man hath lost his power to pay it? I know the *Remonstrants* and *Socinians* generally deny this, and say (and they say true) that *Adam* had not a power to *repent* and believe *in Jesus Christ* (that is, a *specifick power*): but neither were these necessary in that state, nor indeed practicable. *Adam* was *created a just man, that needed no repentance*, needed no *faith in a Mediator*; but *Adam* had a power, and we in him, *to all in that estate necessary*; if *Adam* and we (in him) have by voluntary transgression, made any thing more necessary, and God upon a *Cove-*

a *Covenant of Grace*, hath reſtored us upon the performance of ſuch other things; I hope Gods juſtice ſhall not be impeached, for his not giving us a power to do thoſe things alſo, whereas we originally had a ſufficiency of power to do all God required of us in that ſtate. *Aquinas* ſufficiently determines this point; *Adams reaſon* (ſaith he) *in the ſtate of innocency being ſubjected to God, and his inferiour faculties being ſubjected to his reaſon; he had in ſome ſenſe all graces* [omnes virtutes] *and that both in habit, and act, which do not imply an imperfection repugnant to that ſtate; others, only in the habit*, &c. He inſtanceth in *repentance* only, and ſaith, *Adam* had faith both in the *habit* and *act*; but he ſpeaks of *faith* only as reſpecting *God*, and the *propoſition of the word*, not as reſpecting a *Mediator*, for the *object*; for we all know that in that ſtate there was no need of a *Mediator*, and conſequently, *faith in the Mediator* implieth the *imperfection of a lapſed ſtate, repugnant to the perfection of the primævous ſtate of innocency*. It is enough we had in *Adam* a ſufficiency of power to do all neceſſary to our ſalvation in that eſtate. It was our tranſgreſſion made any thing elſe neceſſary. *Aq. ſum. §. 1. quæſt. 95. art. 3.*

2. You heard under the former head, *That God may have many wiſe ends why he now calleth all men to repent, though he did not intend that upon that call they ſhould repent or believe.*

3. Although lapſed man hath no power of himſelf, *to repent, or believe*, without the *ſpecial effectual grace of God*; *yet he hath a power by vertue of that Common-Grace which God denieth to no man, to do much in order to his repentance and believing.*

4. What if we ſhould leave it for a queſtion to be decided at the great day: whether *Reprobates ſhall be condemned, ſtrictly for not believing, in ſenſu diviſo, that is, not receiving of Jeſus Chriſt, and reſting upon him as their Saviour; or for not believing, in ſenſu compoſito*, not doing what in them lay, that *they might believe*. God calleth all men to *repent* and to *believe*; it is true, it is not in their power to exert an *act of faith*, or a *ſalviſick* act of repentance; but it is in their power to *read the word*, to *hear it*, to *meditate* upon it, *to conſider their ſins, to leave many of them*, as to the external act. I always thought it a very idle queſtion, *An homine faciente quod in ſe eſt Deus teneatur gratiam dare*, Whether if a man did what lay in his power to do, God be bound to give his effectual ſaving-grace. For I dare ſay, an inſtance cannot be given of any that hath done what lies in his power, to whom

whom God hath denied his effectual grace; but *Deus tenetur*, is a very hard saying. Who can make God a debtor to his creature? who hath given unto him, and it shall be repaid him? If we could not say any thing to justifie God in condemning sinners (who have no power to any spiritual act) for not believing, not repenting; yet I think the matter would not be much, for in the great day we shall find God will have enough to say for condemning sinners, for omitting what was in their power to do, or acting contrary to it; though he should say nothing to them, for not doing that which without his special grace is confessedly not in the power of lapsed man. But enough is spoken to vindicate this motion of Divine Providence. My Text is true, *God now* by his Ministers *calleth all men to repent*, and he may do it with consistency to his truth and sincerity, to his holiness and goodness, notwithstanding the certainty of his election, and his certain knowledge of who are his, having wrote their names in the book of life; and notwithstanding the certainty of the *Covenant of Grace*, as to persons, and the certainty of the persons for whom Christ hath died, and the impotency in fallen man, to exert any truly spiritual act, such as those of faith, and repentance must be. Let us now consider how this Discourse may be useful to us by way of practical Application.

Use 1. And in the first place, this may be of use to you to restrain you from approving of the *bold sayings* of those who reflect upon the truths of God, and would turn them into *falshoods*, because forsooth, their narrow apprehensions cannot reconcile them to the truth, sincerity, holiness and goodness of God. Let God be *true* and men liars; let him be good, infinitely good, though all men be bad, This quarrelling at God is an old humour of corrupt hearts. *O house of Israel* (saith God Ezech. 18. 25.) *Is not my way equal, are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquities, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he dye: again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, that he hath committed, and doth that which is right, he shall save his soul alive.* When a sinner repenteth, and believeth, he shall live, he shall be saved: when he apostatizeth from his profession, and returneth with the Dog to his vomit, or goeth on impenitently in his course of sin, and dieth in it, his soul shall perish. What then, are not the

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O but it is not equal, say some, that God should offer life, and the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, to those to whom he intendeth not to give them. How doth it appear, that God offers any such thing to them; why may not Gods offer be only to the elect, and others no further concerned, than as they are in the company of those to whom such grace is offered? But the Ministers of the Gospel who are Gods Messengers, do offer life to all that will believe: they do so, and God will make it good; where now is the inequality of Gods ways? But why is the Gospel at all preached to those who shall have no benefit by it? I answer, What if God please to make use of this as a means the better to restrain the lusts of men, and to keep the world in order, and a temper fit for mutual society. But why are they commanded to repent and believe, that have no power to do either? Had they never a power in *Adam*? If they had, surely God may require his debt although they be not able to pay. Have they a power to do nothing toward these things? If they would do what in them lay, would God deny his grace? Did ever any soul perish, think you, that did what was within its power in order to its salvation? If there did not, why do men quarrel with God? their destruction is of themselves.

Use 2. What remaineth then, but that leaving our disputing with God, or quarrelling either with the truths of his word, or motions of his Providence; *all men apply themselves to be obedient to the Heavenly Command*? The days of ignorance God winked at; but *now*, saith my Text, *God commandeth all men to repent*. Supposing an election of grace, and that not of qualities, but of persons. Supposing an eternal Covenant, and that certain, made betwixt the eternal Father, and the Son of his Love for those that shall be saved. Supposing that Christ did not dye intentionally for all, but for such only as were fore-ordained of God to eternal life and salvation. Supposing lastly, that man in his lapsed estate, hath no power to repent or savingly to believe. Yet I shall shew you there is incouragement enough for any that will mind their eternal interest to do what in them lies, that they may repent and believe: to that end I beg of you to consider these things.

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1. *That God commandeth all men to repent.* It was *John Baptists* work to call to all to *Repent, because the Kingdom of God was at hand.* It was the Apostles Doctrine, it is our doctrine and the substance of our Preaching: certainly the commands of God are the measures of our duty; and every creature by the law of his creation standeth obliged to obey his Creator. If God commandeth him to do something which he cannot do by his natural power; yet surely he is bound to do what he can do, and then to cry to God to help him where he is at a loss. God commands you all to repent, and to believe; certainly none can pretend but he is under the highest obligation imaginable, to go as far as he can; or else his blood will lye upon his own head, and his own Conscience will fly in his face, and in the great day he will have nothing to say why the sentence of eternal death should not pass upon him.

2. God hath *prepared an object for the faith of every soul that will believe.* This is that now, that some keep a mighty stir with, that if *Christ hath not died for all*, then they have not *objectum paratum*, not an *object prepared for their faith.* As if the counsels of God, or Christs intention in dying were the object of our faith, not the *proposition and promise of the Gospel*, that is held forth indefinitely: *whosoever believeth shall be saved.* Now what is that which God requireth of man? But that he should search and try his ways, and acknowledge his offences, and disclaim his own merits and righteousness, and hearing the proclamation of the Gospel; that *whosoever believeth shall be saved*, that he should lay hold *upon the promise.* Is not here an object prepared? is not the indefinite propounding of the grace of the Gospel, ground enough to encourage a soul to trust God upon his word?

3. *As thou dost not certainly know that thy name is written in the Book of Life, that Christ hath covenanted and dyed for thee; so neither dost thou know, nor any one tell thee that thou art not chosen unto life, or that Christ hath not covenanted or died for thee.* The Lepers in the famine, which you read the story of 2 *Kings* 7. they did not know that the *Syrians* were fled, nor that they should find any victuals amongst them; but this they knew, that if they sate still at the entring in of the gate they should dye, and if they entred into the City they should dye, vers. 3. 4. *Now therefore come* (say they) *let us fall into the host of the Syrians, if they save us alive, we shall live; if they kill us, we shall but dye.*

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It was encouragement enough to these poor Lepers, that it was possible they might save their lives by that motion. *Esther* did not know that the King would hold out the Golden-Scepter to her, if she went in to the King; but she knew that if she did not go in, she and her people would all be cut off, and that in a short time: she ventureth in. Thou knowest that if thou sittest still in thy sinful state, thou shalt perish; if thou goest on from sin to sin, thou shalt certainly perish without hope of mercy. But thou hast heard, that the number of them that God hath chosen unto life, for whom God hath made a Covenant with his Son, and his Son hath died, and satisfied Divine justice, is a certain definite number, and thou dost not know, that thou art one of that number; but thou dost not know on the other side that thou art none of that number, thou maist be one for ought thou knowest; there is no law against thee: certainly this is ground and encouragement enough for thee to make the adventure: if God *will save thee alive* thou shalt live, and that eternally; if thou sittest still, if thou goest on in thy sinful courses, thou shalt certainly dye.

4. *Hast thou not as much encouragement, to repent and to believe, as ever any had?* Have not thoulands and ten thousands of the Saints of God, upon no other encouragement than thou hast, broken off sinful courses and sought the *Lord while he might be found*; and have they not succeeded and found rest for their souls. Did God yet ever from the beginning of the world, encourage any soul in its first motions by faith, and repentance toward him, by assuring them that their names were written in the Book of Life? Or that Christ did dye for them in particular? Is it not encouragement enough to thee, to tell thee thou hast as good a ground of hope and encouragement as the *three thousand* that were converted at St. *Peters Sermon*; as any of those servants of God had, of whose conversion thou readest in the *Acts of the Apostles*: what art thou that thou shouldst look for more?

5. Consider, *That there is no other way for thee to know that thou art elected, and that Christ hath paid a price for thee but by thy turning unto God, and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.* The election of God is in it self sure and certain, but it must be made sure and certain unto us, by our *repentance* and *faith*. Did ever any one hear of any soul reaking in its lusts, and going on in its course of sin, ascertained; that God had chosen it unto life, that Christ was the *head* and surety of a better Covenant for it, or

dyed for it? first our *calling*, then our *election* must be made sure, and we must not think to pervert Gods order.

6. What hast thou to do *with Gods effectual Grace, until thou hast improved his common Grace*. There is a common Grace which God denieth to no man, by vertue of which men may read, hear, pray, live a civil life and conversation, leave gross and flagitious courses of sin; why complainest thou of God for not giving thee his special distinguishing grace, inabling thee to exert true spiritual acts, while thou dost not use his common Grace, and do what in thee lies to reform and amend thy ways, and to turn unto God?

7. Lastly, Though no *exercise of common grace, can be meritorious of the special Grace of God*; yet I dare assure thee, *that God neither ever yet was, nor ever will be wanting in his further grace, unto those souls that have made a due improvement of his common grace*, and done what in them lay towards their own salvation. Let us therefore leave our enquiring into the Counsels of God, and disputing questions, which are insignificant to our greatest concerns. Let us leave quarrelling with his truths, and our little foolish and vain indeavours to argue an inconsistency of his *Counsels* with his *Actual Providence*; when we have done and said all we can, it will be found that God is consistent to himself, and that his ways are equal, and the iniquity and crookedness is only in our own hearts and ways. We cannot with our spoon comprehend (it may be) the Ocean, the great Ocean of his Wisdom and Counsel. Let us apply our selves to our own duty, and do what he commandeth us, for which, as you have heard, we have encouragement enough.

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SERMON XXXVII.

Rom. V. 20.

Where Sin abounded, there Grace did much more abound.

I Am indeavouring to open to you the δυσνόητα, the hard Chapters in the book of Divine Providence, solving those *Phænomena's*, or appearing difficulties, which Atheistical Wits have raised, to make the holy God appear otherwise than he is, his Counsels, Truths, and Works, other than indeed they are. I have already spoken to one, relating to the making and establishing a *Covenant of Works* with *Adam*, after the settlement of mans salvation upon *the Covenant of Grace*. The other relating to the dispensation of Providence, in the exhibition and publication of the Covenant of Grace. I come now to some relating to the Actual Providence of God in the permission of *sin* and *sinners*, so much sin, and so many sinners in the world. And for this discourse (as an head to it) I have chosen this text, which in it containeth two great points: *The abounding of sin, and the aboundings of grace*. The Apostle brings in these words in a magnifying of Christ, whom he had compared with the first *Adam*: The first *Adam* brought mankind under sin and guilt. The second brought him under a state of Redemption and Salvation, bringing life and immortality to light. First, the Apostle sheweth whence sin came, then whence grace came. *Paræus* telleth us, that the Apostle in this part of the Chapter, openeth to us the use of the Law, lest any one upon what he had before said should ask; Wherefore the *law was given*: he telleth us, *That the law entred, that sin might abound*; for though the law of it self doth not cause sin, yet by accident it doth; for where there is *no law, there is no transgression*, and the corruption of mans nature enclineth him the more to what is forbidden him—*Nitimur*

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in vetitum: sed hic de actione peccati sermo est qua fit per manifestationem (saith a learned Author upon my Text). The law maketh *sin to abound* by way of manifestation, as the glass maketh the spots in a man or womans face to abound, that is, discovereth them that are. *P. Martyr* reckons five ways, by which the Law contributeth to the aboundings of sin. 1. *By forbidding it.* 2. *By increasing the guilt of it.* 3. *By assigning the punishment of it.* 4. *Multiplying it by the variety of the precepts in it.* 5. *By accusing him, and condemning him for it.* Well, But why *should the law enter, that sin might abound?* hath God then any pleasure or delight in the aboundings of sin? The text telleth you, that Gods design was to advance grace; *that where sin abounded, grace might much more abound.* But my design is not largely, and strictly to handle my text, but only to make use of it, in pursuit of my further design to open to you the difficult things of Actual Providence, which is by all confessed to have an influence upon mens sins; that is, *to permit them*, and *to govern them*, the first of these is what I have here to do with. What the Providence of God doth, or doth not in the permission of sin, I have before shewed you, and may by and by again speak shortly unto it. The Question is,

Quest. *How it can consist with the holiness of a pure and mighty God, having it in his power to restrain, and hinder sin, yet to permit it, and so much of it in the world?* The difficulty of our apprehensions in this matter, ariseth from these things:

1. *That God in his own nature is a most pure and holy being.* Who as he hath nothing in him that defileth, so neither can he abide any iniquity. This seemeth to have stumbled the holy Prophet, *Hab.* 1. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously?*

2. *There is nothing in the world so contrary unto God as sin is,* nothing so repugnant to his nature, nothing so prejudicial to his glory, nothing that he hateth with so perfect an hatred.

3. *That it always was, and is in the power of God to hinder sin;* God could have hindred *Adams* fall, and all the sin which hath since that been committed in the world. Now these things considered, that yet God should not hinder sin, but *suffer men to walk in their own ways,* and to fulfil their unbridled lusts, seems at first view of difficult apprehension.

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It hath been so hard a Chapter to some, that they have fancied two Gods, the one to be the *Principle* of all the good, the other of all the evil that is in the world; they were not able to conceive how a pure and holy God cou'd permit sin. The Operations of *Providence* about sin, I have heretofore more largely discoursed. Amongst others I have instanced in these two.

1. *He doth permit, and suffer it when he might hinder it,*

2. Providence doth co-operate *as to the natural action, though not as to the malice and sinfulness of the action.* It is most certain that in him every man *lives* and *moves.* The blasphemer, the lyer, the profane curser, and swearer could not speak, if the Providence of God did not in the mean time uphold the natural faculties, whose operations are necessary to such actions. Now this is that which sometimes startles our deliberate thoughts; if God indeed be so holy and pure a God, as we have heard he is? if he so hateth and abhorreth sinful actions; and if he be so mighty and powerful a God, why doth not God withdraw that Providence of his, which upholdeth the sinner to the natural action, while he seeth and knoweth which way the lust in the sinners heart will incline his action? I conceive now my text gives some relief to our disquieted thoughts about this particular. Why did God first *suffer the law to enter?* That sin might abound, *that the offence might abound* (saith the Apostle) *v.* 20. But why should sin abound? why did the Providence of God suffer sin to abound? *That grace might much more abound: For,* saith the text, *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ.* The Apostle is here doubtless speaking with a great respect to the first mans sin, of which he had been speaking in the former verse. *Death passed over all men, for that all have sinned:* and *v.* 15. *Through the offence of one, many be dead:* and so in the following verses you read of one mans sin, one mans *offence, one mans disobedience,* &c. But yet he is not speaking only of *Adams* sin, for he tells you, *Many were made sinners, and all have sinned;* and he is also speaking of sin as *consequent to the law given,* which I do not think is to be understood of the law given to *Adam,* and the Covenant made with him; but of the law given by *Moses,* and in that latitude I shall discourse this subject, shewing you that God in a great deal of wisdom, did first suffer sin to enter into

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the world, and still suffereth sin to abound in the world. You may take that for the Proposition.

Prop. *The holy and omnipotent God in an infinite wisdom of Providence suffereth sin and sinners to abound in the world, though himself be of purer eyes than to behold iniquity:* he hates, and abhorreth every sin, nothing so grieveth and dishonoureth him; yet I say, in infinite wisdom his Providence doth permit it, suffering men to fulfil the lusts of their own hearts, and to walk in their own ways. My business must be to give you some account of the Divine Wisdom in it, and to make Gods ways of Providence in this thing to appear unto you equal. It is a true saying of one of the School-men, *Plus est bonum, vel numero vel quantitate quod Deus elicit per mala, quam quod destruitur per mala,* Al. Al. *There is one way or other, either in number or in quantity, more good which God fetcheth out of sin, than is destroyed by sin.* We may be confident of this, or God would never suffer it. And indeed the Doctrinal part of my discourse, will be nothing else than a justification of that *maxim.* I shall therefore this day entertain you with a resolution of this riddle, much like that of *Sampson,* when he had killed the Lyon, and eaten of the honey the Bees had made in the carcase, *Jud.* 14. 4. shewing you, how *out of the eater cometh meat, and out of the strong cometh sweetness:* How out of sin, which is the vilest thing in the world, the most opposite and repugnant thing to the glory of God, the glory of God is yet fetched, and that in a proportion to compensate the loss and prejudice to his glory from the sin of the sinner. It is certain which *Augustine* long since said, and gave as a reason of Gods permission of sin; *Deus judicavit melius de malis benefacere quam mala esse non permittere:* God judged it better to bring good out of sin, than not permit sin to be committed.

1. In the first place, let me shew you *how many Attributes of God are glorified by his permission of sin and sinners in the world.*

1. In the first place it is I think well observed by an acute Author, *That God in this motion of Providence magnifieth his equity to our humane nature.* Equity indeed is but a piece of justice. (But when I come to speak to that Attribute, I shall restrain my discourse to Gods Punitive and Vindicative Justice). Our great master, who hath commanded us to give unto our servants that which is just and equal, will much more do it himself; and it

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is said of God, *He shall judg the people with equity*, Psal. 98. 9. and he took it very ill, when his people said, *That his ways were not equal.* The equity of God required that he should leave humane nature to its liberty; man was created with a reasonable soul, and the very nature of it had been destroyed, if it had been left under a coaction: and in this the condition of humane nature had been worse than that of sensitive creatures, which freely use their natural faculties, and exercise their natural motions. It is a saying of *Aquinas*, *That it is not the work of Providence in its government of man to destroy its nature, but to heal and save it.* God in suffering men to walk in their own ways, doth but leave men to their natural liberty, and thus magnify the Equity of God to humane nature. But this is one of the least.

2. God by the permission of sin and sinners, and the aboundings of sin in the world, hath *infinitely magnified his own goodness.* It is the saying of a very ingenious Author, *Satis usui sunt scelera, si artem & peritiam divinæ beneficentiæ provocant*; Sin is of use enough to God in the business of his glory, if by it the act and skill of the Divine Goodness and Bounty be made appear to the world; the goodness and mercy of God is that Attribute of his, which above all others he hath made choice of to glorify himself in and by: it is that in which he delighteth, which is above all his works. Now without the permission of sin, yea of the aboundings of sin, it had been impossible that Divine Goodness and Bounty should have been so commended to the world. Let me open this a little.

1. *Christs coming, and dying for sinners*, was the greatest act of love that was ever shewed to the children of men. What *greater love* could the eternal Father shew, than to give his Son out of his own bosom, to be a sacrifice for sins: *God so loved the world*, saith *John*, 3 Chap. 16. *that he gave his only begotten son.* Moralists make a question about taking the true measures of the *magis* and *minus* of love, whether the greatness of love be to be measured from the *affliction, intention*, and *self-denial*, of the party loving, or the benefit redounding to the person beloved; but measure which way you will, it was the greatest love on the Fathers side, and the greatest that *Christ could shew, for greater love than this hath no man shewed*, John 15. and herein God commends his love towards us, *Rom.* 5. 8. Besides, the inhabitation

of the spirit was a benefit of Christs death, an effect of his purchase. And what greater love could be shewed on the part of the Holy Spirit (which is the Spirit of Christ), than for it to come down, and to dwell in the heart of a poor creature; for the person of a believer, to be made the *temple of the Holy Ghost, the receptacle of the Spirit of Grace.* Now if there had been no sin, no sinners in the world; what room had there been for a Saviour? what needed one to have *turned away iniquity from Jacob,* to have been *wounded for our iniquities, bruised for our transgressions? He dyed for our sins,* saith the Apostle. How could the love of the eternal Father in sending his Son, or the love of the Son, in taking upon him our nature, and dying for us; or the love of the Holy Spirit, in sanctifying us, and renewing us, and dwelling in us, been manifested to the world? If a *strong man* had not kept the house, what need had there been of a *stronger than he* to have come and dispossessed him? All the love of the *Father, Son,* and *Holy Ghost* magnified in the business of mans Redemption, and the whole Oeconomy of a Gospel-salvation, had been conceal'd, and not known to the world.

2. Again, *How could the love of God, in the conversion of sinners, in the pardon of their sins, in their justification, the sense they oft have of his love have been manifested to the world?* What need were there of any pardon, if no sins were permitted? where were the aboundings of grace in pardoning, if there were no aboundings of sin? What love of God could be seen in the conversion of sinners, if no sinners were permitted in the world? How should God magnify his grace, by saying to any soul, *Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee,* if he did not suffer sins to be committed? Thus you see the greatness of Divine Goodness and Mercy, could never have been declared to the world, but for the motions of Providence, in the permission of sins and sinners, yea and of the aboundings of them.

3. Did not the Actual Providence of God thus permit sin, and much sin in the world; *How should the long-suffering and patience of God be magnified in the world?* This also is a piece of Gods Name, and such a one by which he designeth to make himself glorious: he stileth himself, *Exod.* 34. 6. *Gracious, merciful, long-suffering, slow to anger:* and *Numb.* 14. 18. *The Lord is long-suffering, and full of tender compassion.* Now sin and sinners are the objects about which the long-sufferance of God is

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exercised: *He endured with much long-suffering* (saith the Apostle, *Rom.* 9. 22.) *vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.* How often do we find this in our own experience? when we hear wretches blaspheming God, and daring Divine Justice, how often are we ready to say (and it is a good reflexion), *O what a patient God do we serve!* which of us would endure such affronts and defiances, as God endureth every day? The aboundings of sin in the world make the considerate part of the inhabitants of it admire, and adore the long-suffering and patience of God.

3. *The wisdom of God is also wonderfully magnified by Gods permission of sin.* The Apostle calleth God, *the only wise God.* None so wise as God is, and the *wisdom of God* is eminently magnified by his permission of sin. One great business of wisdom, is to make an Election of the best end; but this is not that which I am here speaking to, God hath fixed his end, it is his own glory; and as I have often told you, he can aim at no other end than himself and his own glory. But next to a good Election of an end, *wisdom* is eminently seen *in the choice and conduct of means, in order to a proposed end*; but herein is the *heighth of wisdom*, to be able to make use of the most unlikely means, and make them to serve our purpose. It is a point I have touched something largely upon in my former discourses upon this Argument, and therefore I shall not here enlarge upon it. To bring a not-being into a being, to make a thing out of nothing, argueth an infinite power; though there be *aliquid materiæ*, something of a matter; yet if there be *nihilum subjecti*, no aptitude in the matter to produce an effect of that nature: as when God took the rib of a man, and made of it a woman; this argued also an *omnipotent infinite power.* But yet, methinks, for God to produce his glory out of the aboundings of sin, argueth yet something more, if not of power, yet of wisdom; to make the *wrath of men to praise him*, and the lyes of men to glorify him. O how doth this commend the infinite wisdom of an only wise God! Sin, all sin is quite opposite and repugnant to the glory of God: it speaks the great Wisdom of God to bring out his glory from it. Thus God hath glory by accident from the permission and sufferance of sin in the world.

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of the ſpirit was a benefit of Chriſts death, an effect of his purchaſe. And what greater love could be ſhewed on the part of the Holy Spirit (which is the Spirit of Chriſt), than for it to come down, and to dwell in the heart of a poor creature; for the perſon of a believer, to be made the *temple of the Holy Ghoſt, the receptacle of the Spirit of Grace.* Now if there had been no ſin, no ſinners in the world; what room had there been for a Saviour? what needed one to have *turned away iniquity from Jacob*, to have been *wounded for our iniquities, bruiſed for our tranſgreſſions? He dyed for our ſins*, ſaith the Apoſtle. How could the love of the eternal Father in ſending his Son, or the love of the Son, in taking upon him our nature, and dying for us; or the love of the Holy Spirit, in ſanctifying us, and renewing us, and dwelling in us, been manifeſted to the world? If a *ſtrong man* had not kept the houſe, what need had there been of a *ſtronger than he* to have come and diſpoſſeſſed him? All the love of the *Father, Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt* magnified in the buſineſs of mans Redemption, and the whole Oeconomy of a Goſpel-ſalvation, had been conceal'd, and not known to the world.

2. Again, *How could the love of God, in the converſion of ſinners, in the pardon of their ſins, in their juſtification, the ſenſe they oft have of his love have been manifeſted to the world?* What need were there of any pardon, if no ſins were permitted? where were the aboundings of grace in pardoning, if there were no aboundings of ſin? What love of God could be ſeen in the converſion of ſinners, if no ſinners were permitted in the world? How ſhould God magnify his grace, by ſaying to any ſoul, *Be of good cheer, thy ſins are forgiven thee*, if he did not ſuffer ſins to be committed? Thus you ſee the greatneſs of Divine Goodneſs and Mercy, could never have been declared to the world, but for the motions of Providence, in the permiſſion of ſins and ſinners, yea and of the aboundings of them.

3. Did not the Actual Providence of God thus permit ſin, and much ſin in the world; *How ſhould the long-ſuffering and patience of God be magnified in the world?* This alſo is a piece of Gods Name, and ſuch a one by which he deſigneth to make himſelf glorious: he ſtileth himſelf, *Exod.* 34. 6. *Gracious, merciful, long-ſuffering, ſlow to anger:* and *Numb.* 14. 18. *The Lord is long-ſuffering, and full of tender compaſſion.* Now ſin and ſinners are the objects about which the long-ſufferance of God is

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ling to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction: there is a great deal in that verse. 1. The Apostle hinteth us in that text, that we are *Clay*, and God is our *Potter*; it was what God had said of old by his Prophet *Jeremiah*, chap. 18. vers. 6. and *Isaiah*, chap. 45. vers. 9. and what the Apostle himself had said in the two verses immediately preceding: upon this account it is, that he here calls such as perish, *vessels of wrath*; Earthen-vessels, with relation to the Potter before-mentioned. 2. Being such *Potters vessels*, God had undoubtedly a *jus absolutum*, an absolute right and dominion over the Sons of men, *vers.* 21. Hath not the Potter *power over the Clay*, of the same lump to make one a *vessel of honour*, another a *vessel of dishonour?* 3. He sheweth, that God doth destinate some to dishonour, not *using his absolute right*, and prerogative meerly, but for just and righteous causes; and he instanceth in three things:

1. *Gods will to shew his wrath.* The wrath of God is nothing else but his *just will* to punish Violaters of his Law. God is willing to shew his hatred of sin in the just punishment of it.

2. *Gods will to make his power known*; that is, in breaking the stubbornness of sinners: thus *ver.* 17. it is said of *Pharaoh*, *For this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth:* and this God calleth a *getting himself glory upon Pharaoh*, Exod. 14. 17, 18.

3. The third reason he gives, is, *That they are fitted for destruction.* Divines start a question from these words, How, or from whom, they are *fitted for destruction*? Some say of *God*, as their Potter, others will have it to be from *Satan*, others from themselves; the different notions may be reconciled. *Paræus* telleth us, there are three things to be considered in these vessels of wrath, their *nature*, their *sin*, the *end:* as to their nature, they are not from themselves, nor from *Satan*, but from God, he is the Maker of all. As to their *pravity* and *natural corruption*, that is not from God, but from themselves, and from the Devil; the end is either *proximate*, that is, their own dishonour, and destruction, or remote, and ultimate, that is, the shewing forth the Justice and Power of God. Neither of these (saith that learned Author) is from themselves, for they do not ordain themselves to destruction, nor design the manifestation of the

the Lords Power and Justice. Thus therefore (saith he) are the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, according to nature, they are created, and made by no other than by God: as to their *sin and corruption*, by which they are made *children of wrath*, guilty of sin, and subject unto wrath; they are made so by *Satan*, by their own *spontaneous fall*, and that sin which followed it: as to the ends, they are from God, and according to his eternal Counsel of predestination. And this is the reason, as is not only observed by *Paraus*, but by *P. Martyr* probably, why the Apostle only saith *fitted*, and not by whom fitted for destruction: that *fittedness* referring partly to *God*, partly to themselves (as they are by sin fitted, it is their own act). Now when he speaks of the *vessels* of mercy, he speaks in the active voice προητοίμασεν, v. 23. *Which he had before prepared unto glory*. So that it being the work of the sinner to fit himself for destruction by the multiplyings and aboundings of sin, and God glorifying his Justice and Power in breaking and destroying sinners, it is easie to understand how Gods suffering the aboundings of sin, tendeth to the glorifying of his Power, and Vindicative Justice. And thus I have shewed how the various Attributes of God are glorified by his permission of sin. But this is but one way by which God hath glory from the permission of sin.

2. He hath glory from it, *from those exercises of grace which are occasioned by it, from his own people*; and these are more *internal*, or more *external*; for such as are more *internal*, *repentance*, *faith*, *humility*, several other graces have either their Original motions from this Providence, or are greatly advantaged in their exercise by it.

1. For *repentance*, that is considerable either in the *inward affection*, or *more external act*. As to the former, if no sin were permitted, how could there be any *humiliation* for sin, any *godly shame*, or *sorrow*, any *bleeding* or *brokenness of heart* in the *sense of sin*? Were no sin permitted, there could be no repentance, no godly sorrow for sin, *&c.*

2. God hath a great deal of glory, by mens *believing on the Lord Jesus Christ*. It is a great piece of the Will of God, that men should believe on him whom God hath sent, and God is glorified by our doing his Will. It were a large Theme to discourse to you how variously God is glorified by mens receiving of the *Lord Jesus Christ*, *and believing in him*. But God had had

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none of this glory if there had been no permission of sin in the world: what is it to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but to accept of him as our Saviour, to expect Salvation from free grace, through the merits of Christ, and to depend upon him for it? Now should God permit no sin there would be no need of a Saviour, no occasion for a redeemer, no need of going out of our selves, relinquishing all confidences in the flesh, and in our selves. Believing in Christ as our redeemer and Saviour supposeth sin making us lost undone Creatures to stand in need of such a Salvation.

3. Again, *Humility* is another habit of grace, in the exercise of which God is glorified: it is one of those things which God by his Prophet telleth us that he requires of man, to *walk humbly with his God*; nothing more contributes to this, than a Child of Gods continual walking in a view of his own past, and renewing Sins. Thus far even the best of Gods people are beholden to their sins, they make them walk more softly, and to have more humble and mean opinions of themselves, and to be more low in their own eyes, neither exalting themselves against God, nor censoriously, and rashly judging their brethren, and the more or less that any Christian looks at home, and considereth himself, and his own ways, the more or less he walks humbly towards God, and charitably towards his brethren.

4. Finally in the 2 *Cor.* 7, 11. You shall find a whole quire of graces, all singing forth the praises of God, and all occasioned by sin. The *Corinthians* had offended in the business of the incestuous person, the Apostle in his former Epistle had brought them to a sense of their sin, and to a godly sorrow for it. *Now* (saith he) *this self-same thing, that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you? Yea what clearing of your selves? Yea what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, yea what zeal, what revenge:* these now are all exercises of grace, which bring glory to God; if God should not sometimes suffer his own people to fall, all the revenue of his glory from these exercises would be lost.

5. Again, hath God any glory from any more external Acts of *Worship* and *Homage, which we perform unto him*; from our *Prayers, Praises,* from our *hearing* his *word, receiving the Sacrament?* Prayer is made up of *Confession* of *Sin,* and *Supplications* for pardon of *Sin,* and strength against *Sin.* *Confession* of Sin

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gives glory to God, my Son (saith *Joshuah* to *Achan*) confess and *give glory to God.* Supplication for good things gives God glory as it owns him to be the Fountain of all good, and our whole dependance to be upon him. It is true, had Sin never entred into the World, our daily dependence upon God, would have evinced Prayer to have been our daily, and a natural homage, which derived, inferiour beings do owe unto the first being. But there would have been no need of Prayer, either for the pardon of Sin, or for strength against Sin. For *Praise*, that also is a piece of Homage, which *Adam* would have owed unto God if he had stood in his first integrity, and state of Innocency; and the *Angels* of God who never fell are continually occupied in singing the praises of God. But the praises of God both by his Saints upon the Earth, and by his glorified Saints, are highly advantaged, by the forgiveness of their Sins, and their having their garments washed in the blood of the Lamb. Now if no sin were committed in the World, none would be remitted and forgiven, and all the glory which the God of Heaven hath from his Saints on Earth, or in Heaven for the free forgiveness of their Sins, would have been lost. Certainly the fall of the evil Angels advantages the praises of the elect Angel, it being doubtless a piece of their song to bless God, who suffered not them to fall as the infernal Spirits did: and indeed this needeth no further evidence than what it hath from every gracious Soul, that hath tasted any thing of the love of God in pardoning mercies. I appeal to any such Soul, to what a pitch it raiseth his Soul in the thoughts of God, and the admirings of his Divine love and grace. *Psal.* 103. 1, 2, 3. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul* (saith *David*) *and all that is within me bless his holy name: Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases.* Thus I have shewed you a second way by which God gets himself glory from Sin, the permission of Sin in the World.

3. *Holiness* and *Piety* are *advantaged by Sin*, Sin is a foil to holiness. *Pulchriora apparent bona ex malorum deformitate.* As the dark shadows are advantages to the Picture, and the wanton thinks at least that her black Patches are advantages to her beauty; so are the Sins and Debaucheries which God permitteth in the world advantages to holiness. The beautiful and well-proportioned works of Nature are the more beautiful for the Monsters, that it erreth in. Sin is but (*monstrum morum*) a monster in mens manners,

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manners. I am perswaded that in the very times wherein we live God hath made use of the prodigious intemperance, lust and luxury, Atheisme and foolish superstitious vanities of some, to make true Religion, Godliness, and Vertue, appear more lovely unto thousands than before they did.

Lastly, From what is said abundantly appears, that it is not without infinite wisdom that the Lord though he be pleased to manifest the riches of grace upon some, to change their hearts, and to turn them from the wickedness of their ways, plucking them as brands out of the fire; yet suffers multitudes to *walk in their own ways, till they drop into that Pit from which there is no Redemption for ever.* We may all of us be assured, that the wise God consulteth his own glory in this. In the same Text, *Pro.* 16.4. Where he tells us *that he hath made the wicked for the day of evil,* he saith in the former part, *that he hath made all things for himself.* Though we be not able to see the particular reason of many dispensations of God, yet we ought to presume they are not done without excellent Counsel, admirable reason, incomprehensible wisdom; yea and infinite love toward those that shall be saved. I shall close this discourse with an excellent saying of one of the Ancients. *If* (saith he) *an ignorant person goeth into a Smiths shop, what matters it if he doth not know of what particular use the Sleth, the Anvil and other utensils are, yet it is enough if the workman knoweth and can make use of every utensil in it's season:* what if we do not know, if we cannot comprehend, of what use some particular sinful actions of men should be for the glory of God; it is enough for us that God knoweth, the vilest action that was ever done in the World, the crucifying of the Lord Jesus Christ, was of the greatest use for the manifestation of the glory of God.

Now after this discourse of the reasonableness of Divine Providence, in permitting Sin, for the further manifestation of the glory of God, and the acquisition of glory to his sacred name, *&c.* It may seem an idle question, *why the Lord suffereth so many sinners,* so as his own number is but a little flock in comparison of those Herds; for sin being a *quality* must inhere in some Subject, and if there were no sinners tolerated there could be no sin: but yet let me a little further enlarge upon this Argument.

1. God suffereth *so many sinners, that some of them might be made Saints*: by Nature *there is none righteous, no not one, all are Children*

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of wrath, one as well as another, all that are implanted into Christ, were natural branches of the wild Olive; they are made otherwise by an engraffing, and implantation into the Lord Jesus Christ. (It is the Metaphor which the Apostle useth, *Rom.* 11. *v.* 17, 19.) Those, all those whom the Lord quickeneth, were at first *dead in trespasses and sins.* It is the saying of a very ingenious Author, *Non est sterilis Deo patientia sua, ut saltem fatigatione tædeat peccatores voluptatum.* Gods patience, saith he, with sinners is not barren, if it were only for this, that God by suffering sinners, many sinners, doth at last tire, and weary some out of their delight and pleasure in their lusts: thou that sayest, why doth a pure, and holy God *endure so many vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*, do but remember that thou thy self wert once a Child of wrath, thou wert once a person fitted, both by Original sin, and by many actual sins for destruction; God suffered thee to go on a long time in thy own ways, that he might weary thee of thine own ways, and bring thee home unto himself; why may not God do so by many others? They are yet as wild Asses, but why may not they also have a moneth in which God may take them? The Children by adoption are picked out of the *Children of wrath. Reservat Deus injustos misericordiæ, per inducias justitiæ.* God by the truce of his justice, (as *Nierembergius* phraseth it) that is, by forbearing the execution of his punitive, and vindicative Justice, reserveth unrighteous persons for mercy. This is one end doubtless of Gods enduring so many sinners in the World, that he might bring some of them, even so many as he hath chosen unto life, to obtain eternal Salvation. But yet some will say why doth God permit such as he knows his long suffering, and patience will never lead to repentance, let me a little answer thy curiosity in this, and shew thee, that even in this the Lords ways are equal and his wisdom infinite.

2. Whether they well repent, and turn or no, it is but reasonable that that God, who hath *sworn by his life that he desires not the death of a sinner, but had rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live, should give them a time to repent*; and how should this be, if God should not bear with them, and give them a space of life? If they never were suffered to think a thought, how should their own thoughts another day accuse them? It is an aggravation of judgment against sinners, That God gives them a space of repentance, and they do not repent. How should God

condemn them for their filthy speeches, their hard speeches, their Oathes and Blasphemies, if God should not suffer them to vent these things? How should they repent if they had no time to repent? If they will abuse the patience of God, and after the hardness and impenitency of their hearts treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, their blood is upon their own heads, God is vindicated in his Justice.

3. The permission of sinners in the world seemeth reasonable, *that if they will not be made better, others may be made good by Gods patience toward them, and forbearance of them.* If there were none of these Briars and Thorns in the world, how could God teach his people by them? Indeed this is one of Gods great ends in the permission of sinners. But let me open this a little in two or three particulars.

1. *God by the exemplary punishment of them for their sins oft-times turns others from their sins.* It is true, God doth not make all prodigious sinners examples of his judgment in this life; but some he doth, and by it makes others to fear and tremble, and to avoid those Rocks upon which their Souls split. If I remember right it is reported of *Waldus*, the Father of the *Waldenses*, that he was converted by the sudden death of one of his companions: I know that examples of judgments are not Gods ordinary means of conversion, nay they are rare instances of converts that are made that way, especially where the word is ordinarily preached. When *Dives* in the gospel fancied, that if one were sent to his brethren from the dead they would believe, and avoid those flames, he was told by *Abraham*, they had *Moses and the Prophets, and if upon the reading and hearing of them they would not believe, if one should go from the dead they would not believe.* Those that harden their hearts under the word, are ordinarily judicially hardned against judgments, or other means that to the eye of reason seem probable means to change their hearts, but are not under a Divine institution for that end, as the word of God is. But yet to some they are so far sanctified; God sometimes goeth out of his ordinary road. Besides, though such examples of judgment seldom prove sole, and principal causes or means; yet they often prove partial causes, and social means, and together with the word conduce much to such a blessed end. I have known one my self that hath owned the ringing of Bells, giving notice of persons that he knew, who probably died in their sins, as a great means to awaken him to a consideration

sideration of his ways and a change of heart and life, whiles his Soul reflected upon the sound, and he said to himself what should become of me, if this Bell now rang for me; if my Soul (as this poor wretched creatures Soul) were now before the Judgment seat of Jesus Christ. Princes the time they go to School use to have their *Umbraes*, some other person (I forget it may be the name they use to give them,) that they may be corrected for them, and their Prince by their correction might learn to take heed of errors. The elect of God, those whom he hath foreordained to eternal life, they cannot die in their sins, but God suffers some vile and wicked neighbours they have to perish in their reaking lusts, and maketh this a means to awaken them, to consider what sin will at last bring them to.

2. God *defameth sin*, by a *plenty of sinners*. It is one of the idle pretences men in this age have for their filthy stage-plays, that sin is there discredited by the representation of it; and shewing the Spectators how ill it becomes men to be debaucht: the truth is, vertue, and sobriety is discredited there (for in the debauchery of them our age hath exceeded all Heathens.) But for those that will see the vileness and uglines of sin, they need not see it in a play in *effigy*: they may see it more livelily in the converse of their neighbours, and I doubt not but much sin is restrained in the world, by the much sin that is committed in the world: the reeling of the drunkard from one side of the street to another, defameth drunkenness, and the indecent immoralities of others both in their words, and actions, make sin more abominable to many considerate Souls; as they say the fire is hotter in winter by the *Antiperistasis* of the cold, so the heat of love to God and zeal for him is advantaged by the excess of hatred to God, and his ways which they see in others.

3. There is yet a third way by which the sinners of the *world do good to the Saints*, and that is, *augendo fidem, & ampliando patientiam*, increasing their faith and patience: every sinner is a grieving thorne, and a pricking briar to the house of *Israel*, and by these briars and thorns God teacheth them (as it is said that *Gideon taught the men of Succoth.*) It was the saying of an ancient writer, *Nullus bonorum habet inimicum nisi malum, qui ideo esse permittitur ut vel ipse corrigatur, vel per ipsum malus exerceatur*; that is, no good man hath any enemy, but a wicked man, whom God doth therefore permit that either himself may be amended,

or the good man may by him be exercised. Thou that wondrest why God permits so many sinners in the world, wonder why there are so many rods, and ferulars for Children, why there are so many *whipping-posts* and *racks*, so many *bride wells*, &c. *Assyria* is the rod of Gods anger, *Isa.* 10. God hath many Children, and his Children will have their wanton vagaries, and extravagances, and must be brought through the world to Heaven, under the discipline of persecutions, and many afflictions; wicked and profane men in the world are Gods gaolers, and bride-well men, that keep his houses of correction; when his servants are wanton and offend him, he sends them to these gaolers, he turns them over unto wicked men. It was *Davids* curse of his enemies, *Psal.* 109. 6. *Set thou a wicked man over him, and let* Sathan *stand at his right hand.* God when his people offend him, sometimes sends them to the *Extortioner*, to catch all that they have: Sometimes to a *barbarous Souldier*, to spoile all their labour; sometimes to a *persecutor*, to rifle their houses, and plunder their pleasant things, to lay them up in gaoles, *&c.* And thus a multitude of sinners is necessary to Gods government of the world.

But yet (for we are very apt to dispute with God) how is it that the providence of God suffers such an excess of riot, such a world of iniquity in the world; if some sin be suffered, if some sinners must be endured in the world, yet why so much sin? Though an easy, and manifold answer might be easily drawn up to this from my former discourse, yet let me add 3 or 4 things.

1. Dost thou that speakest thus, consider what a *dependency there is of one sin upon another, and what an use God maketh of one sin to punish another?* Let me a little discourse each of these. The moralist saith, *Virtutes sunt concatenatæ*; Divines say as much of the graces of the Spirit of God, they have a causative virtue, and influence upon one another, *patience worketh experience, experience hope.* The Apostle tells us, faith worketh by love, it is indeed productive both of love and hope, *&c.* It is also true that *Vitia sunt concatenata*, vices and sinful habits are also linked together, and are productive one of another. *Lust conceiveth* and *brings forth, and sin finisheth* and then *bringeth forth death.* And, as it is observed in nature, the most noxious Creatures are most fruitful, and teeming; so vice and sin is a most fruitful teeming mother, one sin bringeth forth a multitude of sin. *Drunkenness* is the ordinary mother, of whoredom, filthy, and profane discourse, quarrellings and contentions. *Who hath contenti-*

ons?

ons? who hath babling? (saith *Solomon*, in *Pro.* 23.29.) *They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek for mixt wine.* 2. Again, God in his *providence* maketh use of sin *to punish sin.* But the equity of God in that motion of his providence, God willing I shall hereafter more fully discourse.

2. To quiet your thoughts upon this permission of Divine Providence, I shall offer to your consideration what *Nierembergius*, an acute Author, (though a Papist) saith upon this argument, *That the quantity of sin which God permitteth in the world, is nothing to what he hindreth in it.* What a *Brothel house* of *uncleanness*, what a Field of blood and oppression? What an *universal Ale-house* would the world be, were it not for the restrainings of Divine Grace? what but this hindereth, that every man is not a *Cain* unto his Brother, a *Judas* to his *Master*; that every one is not an *Heliogabalus* for lust and luxury, as much a monster of cruelty as *Nero*? The child of God jealous for the glory of God, is often stumbled to see so much sin in the world; whereas he should rather be taken up with the admiration of Divine Goodness, that there is no more prodigious wickedness committed in it. *Gratulor* (saith the afore-mentioned ingenious Author) *compendium peccandi, supremæ illi bonitati fontanæ & miserationi quâ tantus malorum ardor extinguitur.* Would you blame a man, who seeing your House all on fire, should quench that fire, and only leave some straw burning in the Yard. The whole world lieth in wickedness, there is a great depth of lust and sin in all our hearts by nature. God so ordereth it in his Providence, that though he thinks fit to leave some lust burning, yet he smothereth and restraineth the far greater part. He suffereth not the thousandth part of that blasphemy, that uncleanness, that drunkenness, that oppression, fraud, cruelty and injustice which would be in the world, if he took off his hand of restraint from mens spirits. What he doth suffer, his infinite wisdom knows how to make an advantagious use of, for the glory of his great name.

3. Consider *that the time of sinning beareth no proportion to that time, that the Creation shall be without sin.* The world hath lasted five or six thousand years; (Chronologers differ in their calculations) how long it shall last none can tell: many have guessed and already find they have been mistaken. But suppose (which is not very probable) that it should last five, six, ten thousand more: this indeed is a long time for the Devil (who is the god of this world) to reign, and have a kingdom in, and a world of sin

hath been committed, and is committed daily in the world, and doubtless will yet be committed, before God puts a period to the world, and to *sinning-time*: but if it were twice ten thousand years, what is that to eternity, that eternity that shall be consequent to the day of Judgement, when there shall not be a sin committed, nor a sinner seen? *The wicked, and all they, who forget God, shall be turned into Hell.* There shall not be the black patch of a sin in the beautiful face of the *new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*; when that blessed time comes, it shall be all spent in praises and *Hallelujahs*. Stumble not then at Gods Providence in permitting some sin in the world, who hath made so good a provision for his own glory unto a long eternity; which also shall then be advantaged by the much sin suffered in the world. For those who have much forgiven *them, will love much here*, and praise God much, both here and hereafter: the high praises of God in the mouths of glorified saints, are doubtless elevated by the high and much sin which they were guilty of in the world. You read *Rev.* 7. of many thousands of Gods sealed ones which *John* saw, and vers. 9, 10. *A great number which no man could count of all Nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, that stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb; cloathed with white robes, and palms in their hands; who cryed with a loud voice, salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the Throne, and to the lamb:* and again, vers. 12. *Amen, blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be given unto our God, for ever and ever.* Now St. *John* desiring to know who these were, had this answer. *These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb: therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve him day and night in his Temple.* Had they not been defiled with sin, they needed not have washed their robes in the *blood of the Lamb*; and having their robes so washed, they are elevated in the praises of God.

4. *Finally*, We may, as I said before, be assured that God would not suffer so much sin in the world, *If much sin did not tend much to the glory of God at last.* Here may be applied all that I said before in the former part of my discourse on this Argument: shewing you how the aboundings of sin, conduce to the aboundings of grace.

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1. *That*

1. *That grace wherein man is meerly passive and recipient, aboundeth* by the aboundings of sin. The Apostle telleth us, *that love covereth a multitude of faults*: the more faults be covered, the greater love is discovered; God magnifieth grace in *abundantly pardoning*; and there could not be abundant pardoning, if there were not abounding sin; a multitude of mercies could not be magnified, but upon a multitude of Sin. The bredth of the robes of Christs righteousness could never have been seen but for the extension of our nakedness; it is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of Sin, which maketh *all Saints to comprehend what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledg, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God*, Eph. 3. 17, 18.

2. *That grace in the exercise of which we are active, is also advantaged by the much Sin which God permitteth.* Our Saviour telleth us, *Luke 7. those who have much forgiven will love much*, and those *to whom little is forgiven will love but little.* It wonderfully aggravates pardoning mercy in the sense of a gracious heart, to think how many are grinding at the same Mill of sin, that he was formerly imployed in, and that he should be taken, and they left: again, we should never fight the good fight so well to the glory of God, if we had not many enemies to fight with. But I have inlarged far enough in the Doctrinal part of this discourse, shewing you the reasonableness of this motion of Divine providence in the sufferance of sin and sinners, so much sin and so many sinners; notwithstanding the opposition that sin hath to the honour and glory of God, and to the purity and holiness of the Divine being: nothing remains as to this discourse, but to consider how this may be useful to us.

Use 1. In the first place, Let me appeal now to the reason of every one that hears me, whether God in the sufferance of Sin and sinners, doth not act consonantly to the wisdom of the Divine being. It is nothing but our ignorance, and inconsiderateness, that can be any temptation to us to have any derogatory thoughts of God, for these motions of his providence; God doth all his own works in infinite wisdom; and it is in infinite wisdom, that he suffereth sinful men to walk in their own ways. What though *he be an holy God?* This will indeed conclude, that himself cannot be tempted, and that he tempteth no man, but it will not argue

that

that he may not suffer any one to be tempted, that is, as the Apostle *James* expoundeth it, *drawn away by his own lusts, and enticed.* What though he hath a *power* to put a period to sin every moment, yet certainly God is not obliged to do all that he can do, but his power (as ours also is) is governed as to the exercise of it by his will. What though sin dishonoureth God, and impeacheth his glory, he knoweth how to vindicate himself, and to recompense himself as to his glory, and that many ways, from the sins of men. True it is, that it is from the lusts and wickedness of sinners hearts that so much sin is committed in the world, yet it is also from the sufferance and permission of Divine Providence. God being directed by his own infinite wisdom to govern the world in this method, and thus to make a difference betwixt Earth and Heaven; so to order it, that hereby the vessels of wrath may be fitted for destruction, and his chosen ones by many tribulations occasioned generally from the sins, and sinners suffered in the world, may be prepared for the Kingdom of God. *O the height and depth* of Divine wisdom? How unsearchable are Divine judgments, how are the ways of God past our finding out?

Use 2. *But* (in the second place) *let every one take heed of taking any occasion from this discourse, to give himself a liberty to sin.* This is the Apostles reflexion upon this, he foresaw the ill conclusion which corrupt hearts, would draw from these premises; therefore adds, *Rom.* 6.1. *What shall we say then?* Shall *we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid:* he makes it his business in that Chapter to shew that *no gracious justified Soul can do so. How* (saith he) *can they that are dead to sin live any longer therein?* So again, *Rom.* 3. *v.*7 He foresaw that some would say, *if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lye, why then am I judged as a sinner?* Such thoughts are ready to rise up in our hearts, why am I blamed for sinning if God hath glory from my Sns? Or why should I be judged as a sinner, if the *aboundings of sin,* advantage, and make way for the aboundings of grace? Surely God then cannot so severely revenge himself upon me for sin. To restrain such wild thoughts, as these from entring, or prevailing in any of your Souls, let me offer some few things to your consideration.

1. Consider first, *if any good come by sin, to the particular soul that sinneth, it must be from the abounding of gra e.* Sin doth not

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of it self, or from any particular affection or disposition in it, do any soul good; God indeed sometimes turns it for good, so that a soul may say, *it is good for me*, that God suffered me to fall into such a sin. Sin in its own nature tendeth to nothing, but the ruine and eternal destruction of a Soul: it must be from the aboundings of grace, if any good come to the soul from sin; the aboundings of Divine grace in the free pardon, and forgiveness of sin; or the aboundings of grace in the infusion of gracious habits, by which the soul is made more broken-hearted, more humble in the sense of sin, more watchful against it for the time to come, and careful to avoid all temptations to it. *The wages of sin is death*, and the work of sin tendeth to death, to debauch, and to debase a soul. If a sinner getteth to eternal Life, it is through the gift of God; if by reason of his former sinfulness, he now loves God more, and be more zealous for God, and more afraid to offend God, all this *is of grace*, and *grace is free*. Now reason teacheth every man, not wilfully to run upon his own ruine, in hope that he shall experience the kindness of a friend in such a ruined estate. Who will hang himself, that his friend may shew him kindness to cut the halter? or commit Treason against his Prince, to give him occasion to pardon him? We use to account it no prudence to lye at the mercy of another, either as to our lives, estates, or reputations. Who will give away his estate, that the charity of his friends may appear in relieving him? The mercies of God are indeed beyond the mercies of men; but as infinite as they are, presumptuous sinners have no reason to lean upon them. Oh, consider sinner, that it must be *through grace, if thou ere be saved*. And though where sin hath abounded, God sometimes doth make grace to abound; yet it is not thy wisdom to *sin that grace may abound*.

1. Because *Grace, pardoning grace, doth not abound towards all in whom the aboundings of sin are found:* grace aboundeth but to some that have sinned. How knowest thou (seeing grace is nothing else but *love acting freely*) that it shall abound towards thee? If it doth not, thou perishest for ever: that it shall, thou dost not know. Thousands sin, towards whom grace never aboundeth in the pardon of their sins.

2. Because *presumptuous sinning, is as great a block as it is possible for thee to lay in the way of Divine grace. The soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and hath*

broken his commandment, that soul shall be cut off from his people: because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment; that soul shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him, Numb. 15. 30. Now what soul can possibly sin presumptuously, if he doth not, who saith in his heart, I will sin that grace may abound?

Cons. 2. Secondly, *Consider, duty is never to be measured by the event of our actions, but by the rule of our actions.* If thou sinnest thou breakest the Law of the Lord, thou violatest his commandment, and *despisest his word.* Sin in it self is an inordinate action, and therefore to be avoided; though the Providence of God ordereth these actions very often, both to his own glory, and for the particular good of sinners: we are to measure our actions by the Divine rule, and by that to square them, not from the event of them which Divine Grace and Power maketh. Certainly, thou wilt say that *Judas*, and *Pontius Pilate*, and *Herod*, and the rest of those who were in a confederacy against the life of Christ, were all exceeding guilty before God, and will, some of them, in the great day, most righteously be turned into Hell, for crucifying him who was the Lord of life; though God used their action, as a means to procure the expiation, and atonement of the World: thousands shall be saved by the effusion of that blood, for the spilling of which yet they will be damned. What though God will suffer sin to abound, that his Grace may much more abound; yet this is no license for thee to suffer sin to abound, thou art to guide thy action by the Divine rule. God governeth his by his own infinite Wisdom, God makes the best of thy bad market; but yet it is thy concern to make the best market thou canst, both for thy own soul, and for the glory of God.

Cons. 3. *Thirdly*, What if God may get himself glory, and may get himself glory from peoples sins; yet this glory, 1. *May be from others, not from thee.* 2. *It may be only a glory gotten upon thee.* 1. I say, first, possibly the glory which God will get from thy sins, shall be *from others, not from thy self.* Many times, the sin which maketh the sinner worse, subjecting him to the wrath and vengeance of God, debauching and defiling his soul, makes others better; so God hath a glory from his sin. The persecutor tries the *faith and patience* of the Saints, and is a means to help them

them to the Kingdom of Heaven, and so God hath glory from his sin; but it is from others, not from the sinner; he in the mean time damneth, and destroyeth his own soul. 2. Possibly God will get himself *glory upon thee*, upon occasion of thy sin, as he said, *I will get me honour upon Pharaoh:* That was by breaking him in pieces, by destroying both him and his Army in the Red Sea. This is small encouragement to thee to go on in sinning, because God will get glory from thy sins; thou canst not assure thy self, that he will get himself the glory of his pardoning, or sanctifying grace from them.

4. Wilt thou say, But if I may bring glory to God, I ought to do it, though it be by my damnation? Consider, *That no man can in any sincerity, pretend to the willing of the glory of God by sinning.* The Reason is, because sin is directly opposite to Gods Glory. What sense is it *to will the glory of God by dishonouring him*? Sin is a thing, which of its own nature dishonoureth and reproacheth God. Canst thou pretend to design the honour and glory of God, by doing that which is directly contrary to it? It is a question, whether our reasonable natures will suffer us to will the glory of God in our own damnation? but it is impossible, that any should sincerely wish the glory of God, and pursue this wish by wilful and presumptuous sinning.

Object. But still will the poor creature say, *Why am I judged as a sinner? What reason hath God to condemn me for my sins, if he getteth glory by them?*

Sol. 1. I answer, *Because the judgment of God is a righteous judgment, he proceedeth against men according to their actions, and the merit of them, not according to the event of their actions, wisely ordered, besides, and beyond their natural tendency to the glory of his own holy name:* That the sinners works issue in the glory of God, is Gods work, not theirs; and they can therefore expect no reward upon that account. Besides, the eventual necessity which the Providence of God puts upon things, doth by no means justifie the obliquity of the actions. Our Saviour tells us, *it must needs be, that offences come; but woe be to those by whom they come.* It must needs be that sin should be committed in the World: God hath determined to permit them, mens lusts hurry them into the commission of them; Gods Providence must fetch him a

great deal of glory from them; but yet, woe be to the sinner, without a timely repentance.

Use. 3. In the last place, Doth God in infinite Wisdom (as you have heard) permit sin in the World, and that for the end that I have shewed you, *that he might be glorified? Let us then make it our business, to make such uses of the sin that we see in the world, and the sins our selves have committed in the world, as by occasion of them God may be more glorified by us.* If you ask me how this may be, it may easily be gathered from my preceding discourse; but yet for the sake of those who are of meaner capacity, let me in this branch of Application recapitulate a little,

1. For the sins of others which we see permitted in the World.

1. *Let us be quickened upon the view of them to adore the patience, and long-suffering of God.* Dost thou hear a wretch curse and blaspheme, and profane the great and dreadful name of God, and defie the God of Heaven, challenging his own damnation? and doest thou see God suffering him to live from year to year, and to go on in this course? Doest thou see another in the heighth of rage against the people of God, endeavouring if it were possible to root out all Religion, and dayly devouring those that are more righteous than himself? Let it help thee to recognize the patience of God, do thou upon occasion of others profaneness and blasphemy, give God the glory of his *patience.* Let it make thee many a time reflect and say, O what a patient God is the God in whom I trust! he seeth these vile wretches, he could as easily crush them, as I with my foot can crush a worm; yet he spareth them, and with much long-suffering, endures the vessels of wrath fitted for Hell.

2. Let the view of the sins of others which thou seest God permitting for his own wise ends, make thee *adore the wisdom of God.* Thou art posed to think what glory God can procure to himself, from the profaneness and blasphemy of wicked men; but God will certainly do it, and would never suffer their profaneness, if he did not know how to do it. *O! the infinite wisdom of God,* that can make the wrath of man to praise him! Let thy heart be affected with that meditation.

3. Again, Doest thou see the world of sin that abounds, doest thou hear of prodigious lusts, blasphemies, cruelties, *&c.* which make thy soul tremble? Let God upon this occasion, *have the*

glory

glory of his free-mercy and grace towards thy soul. Bless God that he hath given thee another spirit. Say, *Lord*, why was not I as one of these? I had the same seed of sin in me, my heart was as full of original lust and corruption as theirs? Oh! what reason have I to adore the free grace of God, that I am not as this beastly drunkard, as this unclean wretch, as this monstrous blasphemer! If it had not been for free and rich grace, I had been as bad as they: It is that which made me to differ.

2. But let God have glory from us upon the occasion of his so long suffering us to walk in our own ways. Now that may be many ways, let me a little particularly direct here also.

1. *Let it make thee live in a dayly admiration of free grace, both in pardoning thy former guilt, and in renewing, and changing thy heart.* This, this is a work not for a rapture, not for an hour, or a day; but for eternity. It will doubtless be a great piece of our work when we come to Heaven, to cry *salvation to our God and to the Lamb. Blessing, and glory, and honour, and wisdom, and thanksgiving be to the Lord for ever and ever.* It should be much of our work upon the earth, if we have either obtained the sense of the pardon of our sins, or a good hope through grace: you shall find St. *Paul* beginning most of his Epistles with such a *blessing of God.* O you redeemed of the Lord, you that are come out of a state of deep guilt, you can never think, nor speak enough, what God hath done for your souls. It is a great work of God, and he doth his great works, that they may be had in remembrance. Let God have some glory from thee, for pardoning those sins by which he hath been much dishonoured by thee; and as for his pardoning, so for his *sanctifying grace.* Admire God, bless God upon the view of thy former hard heart, profane and unclean spirit; say, Ah Lord! that ever such an *Ethiopian* as I was, should through grace change my skin, that ever such a rebellious spirit should be made obedient, such a profane wretch should ever have an heart toward Heaven; that ever one that loved his lusts so well as I have done, should be taught of God to love him, and fear him, and delight in him! that a *Saul should be amongst the Prophets!* a *Paul* a persecutor, a blasphemer should be amongst the Apostles! a *Mary Magdalen* should wash her Lords feet, and be so humbled, as to wipe them with the hairs of her head! the offering up of these praises glorifieth God.

2. Let

2. Let thy former sins make thee *more abundant in penitential tears, and in confessions of thy sin unto God.* God delighteth to hear a soul acknowledg its iniquities, and take shame to it self. Let thy reflection upon thy former ways, make thee with *Peter to weep bitterly*, make thee go alone, and confess thy sins unto him that hath forgiven them; the more vile thou makest and owndest thy self, the more thou glorifiest God, as a God of free grace, and infinite mercy.

3. Let thy *former sins* ingage thee to *love God more. Hath much been forgiven thee, O love much:* Say with thy self, O, I can never love God enough, I can never do enough for him. I that have done so much against him, I that have been so profane, so vile, that have spent my youth and strength in the service of my base lusts and pleasures, and am yet received to mercy at last; What shall I render unto the Lord? Let my burning love to God, and whatsoever beareth his image and superscription, make some amends for my burning lusts, which had consumed my poor soul, if God had not mercifully quenched them.

4. Let thy former sins, and thy reflections upon them, make thee to *walk softly*, and *humbly, with God all the days of thy life.* Doest thou find thy heart at any time begin to swell in an high opinion of thy self? Say, my soul, What hath a sinner to be proud on? what hast thou that hast been so filthy, so polluted to glory in? High thoughts become not one that hath been so dirty, so polluted, and unclean as thou hast been.

5. Let *your reflections upon your sins, bring forth that brood of graces* which the Apostle mentioneth, 2 *Cor.* 7. 11, *Indignation, carefulness, fear, vehement desires, revenge*; Indignation at your selves for your former errors. Anger never hath a truer object, than when it is exercised upon our selves for our miscarriages. *Revenge*, a revenge upon our selves, this doubtless lieth much in acts of *mortification*, and *self denial*; mens denying themselves in the lawful use of the liberty of those things which they had before sinfully abused. *Fear*, a fear of again falling into such temptations, as they had before been overcome with. *A Care* in looking to your ways, and vehement desires in all things to please God, and to walk more perfectly before him.

6. *Finally*

6. Finally, You shall make an improvement of your sins, if your reflexions upon your former sins, both of omission and commission, shall *engage you to more frequent acts of homage to him*, to be more in *prayer*, in *praise*, in *hearing*, &c. Thus it was with St. *Paul*, he reflected upon himself, *as not meet to be called an Apostle, because he had persecuted the Church of Christ. But* (saith he) *by the grace of God I am that I am, and his grace bestowed on me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly*, 1 Cor. 15. 9, 10.

SERMON XXXVIII.

Job V. 6, 7.

Although affliction cometh not out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground: yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

THe words which I have read to you, are the words of *Eliphaz*, the *Temanite*, unto his friend *Job*, who *Chap.* 3. had made so bitter a complaint of his afflictions: whether he had this title from his Ancestors, as some think, *Gen.* 36. 11. where we read of one *Eliphaz* (a descendent from *Esau*, who begat *Teman*), or from his Countrey (which I take to be most probable); for we read *Jer.* 49. 7. *concerning Edom, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Is wisdom no more in Teman? Teman* was certainly a City in the dominion of *Edom*, famous both for wise and valiant men, as you may learn from *vers.* 8. of the Prophecy of *Obadiah*; *Shall I not in that day* (saith the Lord) *even destroy the wise-men out of Edom, and understanding out of the Mount of Esau, and thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed:* It is not much material. This *Eliphaz* in probability was an *Edomite*, an inhabitant of *Teman*, a friend of *Job*, who by appointment was come with the two others to visit *Job*, upon the report of his great affliction: he began

gan his discourse in the former Chapter, and continueth it in this. I shall not concern my self in the other part of *Eliphaz* his discourse, in the Verses which I have read to you, he seemeth to comfort *Job* from a twofold Consideration.

1. *That the hand of God was in his affliction*; for that is implied, when he saith, *Affliction cometh not out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.*

2. *From the consideration of the fate of man.* *Man* (saith he) *is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.* The Proposition of these two Verses, is plainly this:

Prop. *That God hath a great hand in all the evils that come upon us.* Man is born unto trouble, and it is as natural to him, as for the sparks to move upward, and his afflictions come not out of the dust. It is the observation of an Eminent Divine of our own (in his excellent commentary upon this Verse), that this is a *Proverbial speech*, and the sense of it, *That affliction cometh not by chance or fortune*; and so *the dust*, and *the ground* in my Text stands opposed, 1. *To God*, and 2. To *our selves*. What if I should offer my thoughts, that it is an *Eliptical speech*, and much parallel to that, *Psal.* 75. 6, 7. *For promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South: But God is the Judg, he putteth down one, and setteth up another:* So here *affliction* springeth not out of the dust, nor trouble out of the ground, *but God hath an hand in all*; only this latter part is left to us to be understood. My present design will not lead me to consider how far man is *felo de se*, and the author of his own evils, having the meritorious cause in his own soul; but I shall only discourse of God as the *efficient cause*, the other will fall in, as that which moveth God to such an execution of Providence.

Here are two branches in the Proposition.

1. *That man is born unto affliction and trouble, as the sparks fly upward*; it may be understood that he hath a right to it, as the sparks have by the Law of Creation, disposing and ordaining them to such a motion; so man hath a legal right to trouble, by vertue of the first Covenant, *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt dye.* Now this man hath as a sinner depraved, and fallen from that Original rectitude in which God created him. 2. *He hath a natural fitness and disposition to it*, and is by his nature subjected

jected to a variety of *afflictions* and *troubles*. As the sparks, by reason of their levity, have an aptness to move upward; so hath man through his natural constitution, ever since the *crasis* of his humours was impaired and spoiled upon the fall, a native fitness and disposition to receive impressions of affliction and trouble.

2. That this *trouble, these afflictions come not upon us by chance, but by the hand of God.* It was the saying of a good Prophet, 2 *Kings* 6. 33. *This evil is of the Lord.* The Prophet speaks of evils more generally, *Amos* 3. 6. *Shall there be any evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it?* and vers. 5. *Can a bird fall in a snare on the earth, where no gin is for him?* And this is true of all species of *penal evils*, which we call *troubles* and *afflictions*, whether they fall upon our *bodies* or *spirits*, or in our *estates*, or from our *relations*, &c. The Question is,

Quest. *How this is consistent with the goodness and mercy of God? Can God be the Author of evil?* Lam. 3. 33, 34. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men to crush under his feet all the prisoners of the Earth.*

Sol. The answer is very easie, *there is an evil of sin*; of this God cannot be the Author, he can neither be *tempted with evil*, nor tempt any man: but there is an *evil of punishment*, indeed in it self not evil, as I shall shew more by and by. Of this none doubteth but God may be the Author, yea there is no evil of this nature in the City, which he hath not done.

2. *Nor is this at all inconsistent, either with the purity and holiness, or the mercy and goodness of God*; for, as I said before, *these kind of evils are only nuncupatively so*, and have no more evil in them, than as they are ingrateful to our pallats, and but nicknamed evils by us, following the fallible judgment of our senses. *Quæ vulgus infamat malorum titulo arcanis suæ benignitatis decrevit*; God in his eternal thoughts of love, hath decreed the effecting those things which we scandalize with the name of Evils: Evils of punishment are *good* under a disguise, and we should not call them Evils, if sense did not cast a mist before our eyes. 'Tis sense, deceivable sense, that both makes us call the *real evils* of sin *good*, and the real *good things of afflictions, and troubles, evil.* When God once dispelleth this mist, and opens the eyes of the spiritual understanding, it sees after another manner, and it then

crys out with *David*, *Psal.* 119. 67. *Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I have kept thy word.* Vers. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.* Thus the child, when it comes to understanding, blesseth the *rods* and *ferula's* with which he was corrected; and which, when he was a child he deprecated, and would gladly have cut in pieces. Let me shew you a little, that these things which we disgrace with the name of Evils, and of which the *holy* and *gracious God* is not ashamed to be the Author; are not Evils, but such as deserve a better name, and such good things as are some of the greatest goods the child of God meets with on this side of Heaven. To this purpose we will consider them,

1. *As they contribute to the Predication of the Holiness and Justice of God*, and the making him to be feared and adored in the world.

2. *As they many ways contribute to the happiness of those that shall be saved.*

1. *I say, first, as they predicate the glory of Gods Justice and Holiness.* Justice and Holiness are two eminent Attributes of the Divine Being, so essential unto it, as if he should not be *just* and *holy*, he could not be God. Now the Holiness and Justice of God could never be so known in the world, but for the afflictions, troubles, and punishments which are abroad in it; God is infinitely removed from our senses, we can only read him in his word, and in his works. The word of God evidenceth these two Attributes to us by faith, for the word is the object of faith, and faith is the evidence of things not seen. The word of God speaketh God a *just* and *holy* God, and therefore we believe it: but as in a State, the Justice of the Magistrates would never be seen in making good Laws, and discoursing just things, if he never put them in execution; so neither should we ever have any demonstration of the Justice and Holiness of God, if it were not for those afflictions and punishments of sinners, by which he declareth to the world his abhorrence of sin, and the exactness of his Justice. I remember the Apostle, *Rom.* 3. 25. telleth us, *That Christ was set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare Gods righteousness:* and God being about to destroy *Pharaoh*, saith, *I will get me honour upon Pharaoh.* What honour? the honour of his Justice and Righteousness. It is the great interest of God, to declare unto the world his Justice and

Holineſs; How elſe ſhould he have the revenue of his glory from theſe Attributes? Now I ſay, Evils of puniſhment are upon this account great goods, and were neceſſary, if they were cauſative of no other than this good. If God obtained no more from them, than the Proclamation of his Holineſs, and Predication of his Juſtice and Righteouſneſs, yet this were enough: and thus much he gains from his puniſhment of the worſt of men; if they be not made better by them, yet God is by them made more glorious, and declareth his righteouſneſs. The argument is this: Thoſe things cannot be evil, however we may miſcall them, which immediately tend to make God more glorious in the eyes of the world: but this all Evils of puniſhment do, they ſpeak God a pure and holy God, and a juſt and righteous God. But there is much more to be ſaid than this is.

2. *They very much contribute to the good of ſuch as ſhall be ſaved.* 1. They contribute to make us better while we live here; and, 2. To make us eternally happy hereafter. It is only the fooliſh child that (as I ſaid before) quarrelleth at the rods and ferula's that correct the wildneſs and wantonneſs of its youth. The grown man bleſſeth God, and thanks his maſter for them: *He that ſpareth the rod*, ſaith *Solomon*, *hateth the child: but he that loveth him, chaſteneth him betimes*, Prov. 13. 24. and adviſing Parents, again ſaith, *Prov.* 23. 13, 14. *Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beateſt him with the rod, he ſhall not dye: thou ſhalt beat him with the rod, and ſhalt deliver his ſoul from hell.* In ſhort, 1. By *afflictions*, *Souls ordained to life, are kept from hell.* 2. By *afflictions*, *ſuch ſouls are fitted for the Kingdom of Heaven.*

1. I ſay, firſt, *By afflictions, as by a divine ſacred means, the ſouls of ſuch as are ordained unto life, are ſaved from hell.* If mans rod may be a means to ſuch a bleſſed end, Gods rod will certainly do much more: *the rod and reproof give wiſdom*, Prov. 29. 15. *Solomon* tells us, *That fooliſhneſs is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction ſhall drive it far from him*, Prov. 22. 15. It is as true as to the Children of God, as it is with reference to the Children of men. Have not you obſerved a tender Mother, ſometimes ſeeing a fooliſh child too buſie with the fire, or candle, taking the childs hand, or finger, and holding it ſo near, that it ſcalds, or burns it ſelf, ſo learning the burnt child to dread the fire? God hath never a child, but is too too

ready to be playing with hell-fire, playing over the hole of the Asp, and den of the Cockatrice. God takes his childrens fingers, and scalds them a little with the fire of Hell in their Consciences, making them to be a continual terror, instead of a continual feast, or with the Candles of Afflictions and outward trials, and thus they are delivered from Hell. *Adam* had never seen death, he had only heard of it in the threatning, in case he did eat of the Tree that stood in the midst of the Garden: he put out his hand and took of the fruit, and did eat, his posterity shall now see and feel death; they shall be in *deaths often*, and have leisure to think, if the torments of the *stone*, or the *gout* be so great, what will the torments of Hell be? If I am not able to stand under the terrors of an affrighted Conscience for a few months, how shall I abide everlasting wrath? That so he may be more wary and afraid. Demonstrations of the truth of the word, have a great force with our unbelieving hearts. God hath therefore in infinite wisdom and goodness, so ordered it, that one while his people shall be in the fire of a Fever, anotherwhile in the darkness of a divine desertion. By the first they shall learn to conclude how hot the fire of Hell must be; by the later, how dreadful that utter darkness shall be, which shall be the impenitent sinners portion: what it is to be forsaken of God for ever, upon the hearing that dreadful sentence, *Depart from me you cursed, into everlasting burnings, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* They shall sometimes find Satan at their right hand, to learn them what it is to be with the Devils to all eternity; they shall sometimes want bread to eat, and water to quench their thirst, and left from thence to conclude, what the condition of a *Dives* is, that would in those flames be glad of a cup of cold water to cool his tongue: they shall have extremities of pains for a little time in some particular joynts and limbs, and thence gather what the torments of the whole body and soul must be for ever and ever; when all the Vials of Divine wrath shall be poured out upon them. I do not doubt, but many a soul in glory, is this day blessing God for its life of trials, pains and afflictions; and could we hear them speak, they would tell us, they were beholden in a great measure, to the thousands of little hells, they suffered here, for the Heaven to which they have crouded, through much tribulation, and waded through many waters of *Marah*, which they found it difficult (while they were in their delicate flesh) to drink of, because their taste was bitter.

2. By

2. By afflictions and troubles *the ſaints are fitted for the Kingdom of God.* They are ſuch good things as accompany ſalvation, and make the heirs of ſalvation fit for the Kingdom of God. We muſt be *made meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light* before we come to it, *Col.* 1. 12. and we are made ſo by afflictions in a great meaſure. Do you ſometimes ſee ſome beautiful ſtones in a famous ſtructure, ſhining with variety of Colours, and adorning the places where they are? How came they (think you) by this beauty? were they only beholden to the Painter for an ingenious mixture, and laying on of colours? This would never have made them ſo without hewing, and ſmoothing, and poliſhing; but both theſe together complete their beauty. The Stone-cutter firſt hews off their roughneſs and poliſheth them; then the Painter layeth his colours upon them. Amongſt other expreſſions, by which the Scripture expreſſeth the bleſſed ſtate of the ſaints, this is one promiſe, Rev. 3. 12. *I will make him that overcometh a pillar in the houſe of my God.* To make a Soul a Pillar, a beautiful glorious Pillar in the Houſe of God; it is not enough that the holy ſpirit comes, and like a Painter adorneth the ſoul with its varieties of gracious habits; but the Providence of God (eſpecially as to ſome of them, who are of courſer rougher conſtitutions,) muſt alſo come and hew, and cut, and poliſh them, with varieties of trials and afflictions; and thus they become at laſt beautiful Pillars, beautiful for faith and patience, for ſelf-denial and meekneſs; ſtrong to bear the croſs, and ſubmiſſive to the burthen of it. Thus by many tribulations they enter into the Kingdom of God; by many tribulations, not only as the road to Heaven, the dark entry into that place of light, but as means fitting them for Heaven; Files, filing off that ruſt with which they could never enter in there. Even the man according to Gods own heart confeſſed, that *before he was afflicted, he went aſtray*; and that his afflictions had contributed to his learning of the Lords Statutes. We ſillily call afflictions evils; but *conſider thy ſelf* (ſaith an acute Author) how often haſt thou been made better by thoſe things, thoſe afflictions which thou defameſt with the name of evils? *Auguſtine* lamented, that a Fever had corrected that luſt in him, which the love of God, and the meditation of that could not extinguiſh. Certainly the ſame reaſon which forbids us to call that good which maketh us worſe, will likewiſe reſtrain us from calling that *evil* which maketh us better. God doth *ex di-*

ſpendio

spendio naturæ, parare compendium gratiæ; (in the phrase of an ingenious Writer) he maketh the outward man decrease, that the inward man may by it increase: so that troubles and afflictions seem but Divine inventions to make the saints both more holy, and more happy. How should we have lien grovelling on the earth, if God had not prepared us there a bed of thorns; and lien always sucking at the worlds breasts, if God had not rubbed them with this wormwood? how often would the pitifully wanton heart of a good Christian have been priding it self at a Looking-glass, if God had not spoiled her smooth face with the Small Pox, or some other deforming disease? How often is the love and delight of a soul canton'd out to a Wife or an Husband, to a Child or a Friend; and how little a share hath God of it, until he cuts off these suckers from the roots of our souls? How little time can a man or woman oft-times find for Meditation or Prayer, for examining his heart, and reflecting upon his ways, till God shutteth him up in a Prison, in a sick Chamber, *&c.* that he hath nothing else to do? then he cries with the Church, *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.* How little, how seldom should we with any seriousness, or in any solemn manner remember God, if God sometimes did not forget us? When should we be willing to entertain thoughts of a better life, of a more enduring substance, if we always had full measures of the contentments of this life? The uncertainty we have of earthly riches, makes us look for the more enduring substance. A banishment from our Country, or daily persecution and vexation in it, makes us think of, and prepare for a better Country. By dying daily, we become willing to dye, and to be with Christ. If we did not see the gourds that refresh us, and keep the heats of the world from our heads, come up in a night, and go down by an East wind the next night, we should cry, it is good for us to be here, let us build us Tabernacles. We should be married to the world, and unwilling ever to think of a divorce, or a being married to Christ, if God did not sometimes let us experience that we had a lye in our right hand, were fond of a picture, and embraced a shadow. The Gaols, and prisons of the earth make the earth more bitter, and the liberty of the sons of God more sweet. The pains of the earth, and the labours of the world, make the rest of Heaven and the joys thereof more desirable. Besides, that faith and patience are no Summer-graces: if we should never have any

any Winters, when should they have any exercise? Tribulation worketh patience, and the hour of trial is the time for its perfect work. But this were almost an infinite Theme to discourse in its latitude, the variety of good which floweth to the souls of Gods people from afflictions and troubles; they are by them tried, purged, made white; they are by them made more holy and humble, all which good justly entituleth God to a being the Author of them; they do not only flow from his justice, as the just punishments of sin, but they are the noble effluxes of his goodness, and are so far from derogating from the glory of that, that they exceedingly tend to the commendation of it; and we are mistaken in the notion of them when we call them evils, and make up the judgement meerly from sense, which indeed so nick-nameth them. I know indeed there is another *Phænomenon* of difficulty here, and that is, how it can stand *with the justice of God* to punish his people for those sins for which he hath accepted a *satisfaction* from the Lord Jesus Christ, and given an acquittance in the actual justification of a sinner, and the forgiveness of his sins? but I have spoken to that before, when I spake to that Observation, *That God with the afflictions of this life, doth often punish past, and pardoned sins.* I shall therefore pass on to the application of this discourse, which I shall dispatch in two words of exhortation. 1. *To own God in all your troubles and afflictions.* The second shall be *to study such an improvement of your afflictions, as instead of quarrelling at Divine Providence in these dispensations, you may see reason to bless God for them.*

Use 1. In the first place, *Doth not affliction spring out of the ground, nor trouble out of the dust?* O then, in the day of your troubles *look not only upon the ground,* let not your eyes be meerly upon the dust. It is the silly Dog that runs after the stone that is thrown at him, and biteth that: wiser creatures (such as man is) overlook that, and consider the hand that hurled it. Afflictions of all sorts, are but stones out of the sling of Divine Providence, they are Gods messengers; he saith to the Disease, go, and it goeth; come, and it cometh. Art thou sick? see the Lord calling for the disease that disordereth thee. Art thou reproached? see also this affliction not rising out of the dust. *Shimei* cursed *David*; *Perhaps* (saith *David*) *God hath bidden him curse.* It is strange how much light to this purpose shone upon the Heathen. I remember *Virgil* an heathen Poet, in the story of the taking of *Troy*, bring-

bringeth in *Æneas* telling great stories of his valour, in that night *Troy* was taken: he tells us that he at last saw *Helena* the strumpet, for whom (as that fable goes) all that misery came upon that place, and was about in his heart to kill her: two things the Poet representeth as hindring him. 1. *That he should get no reputation by killing a woman:* But a second was, his Mother *Venus* appeared to him, and tells him.

Non tibi Tyndaridis facies invisa Lacenæ
Culpatusve Pani, verum inclementia Divum
Has evertit opes, sternitque a culmine Trojam.

That he was not so much to blame *Helena* (the *Grecian* strumpet) nor *Paris* the *Trojan* adulterer, that by his fetching her from her Husband, a Nobleman of *Greece*, had given occasion to that war, but the anger of the gods: (they were Heathens, that was their dialect) and then the Poet goes on, describing how *Venus* shewed her son *Æneas*, *Neptune* o'returning the foundations of the walls with his *Trident*. *Juno* keeping the gates open, and calling in the enemies her favourites from the Ships to invade the City, and *Minerva* in another place battering down the Towers, and *Jupiter* himself putting valor into the *Grecians*. Even the Heathens by the light of nature understood their afflictions coming from a Divine hand. Certainly Christians that have the Scriptures should understand more. Art thou, or are thy relations sick? See God standing at thy beds head, and giving strength to thy disease: art thou in Prison, see the hand of God locking the prison door upon thee, and keeping thee in bonds: could we do this, let me but instance in two or three excellent effects which would follow our recognizing God, as the Author of our afflictions.

1. *It would restrain both our hands and tongues from all thoughts of private revenge upon instruments of evil to us.* O how ready, if any hath done us evil, are we to say, I will do unto him, *as he hath done unto me.* How natural is a *Lex talionis*, *An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*, and an ill word for an ill word, and an ill turn for an ill turn. Indeed the Magistrate ought sometimes to give it; he is the Minister of God to revenge evil: but could we but say with *David*, perhaps God hath bid him curse, God hath bidden him to smite me with his tongue, or with his fist of

wickedneſs. We ſhould leave *vengeance* to him, who hath ſaid, *Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it*; I ſpeak not this excluſively to any thing but thoughts of private revenge. It is lawful enough to ſeek for ſatisfaction for injuries done us in our names or eſtates, by the Magiſtrate, and according to the laws of the Nation in which we live. But I ſay, the conſideration of the hand of God in all the evils that come upon us, ſhould bridle our thoughts as to *private revenge*.

2. A due conſideration of this, would alſo *ſtop our mouths* as to all *effluxes of impatience*; could we but ſay concerning every evil that befalls us, *this evil is of the Lord*: we ſhould preſently think, *Who ſhall ſay unto him what doſt thou? It is the Lord* (ſaid that good man) *let him do what ſeemeth him good: I held my peace* (ſaith *David*) *when I underſtood it was thy doing*. Indeed our rational nature is ſo far convinced of Gods ſoveraignty and juſtice, and right to do with his creatures (eſpecially ſinful creatures) what ſeemeth him good, that it is in ſome meaſure diſpoſed to be ſilent before the Lord: but eſpecially every renewed and ſanctified nature, readily puts its mouth in the duſt, and cries out, *Why doth the living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſin?* The juſtice of God, the wiſdom, goodneſs and mercy of God ſtopeth his mouth. 'Tis true, we are but fleſh, and the beſt of Gods people have their fits of impatience; *Job* (you know) had ſo; but Godly men will quickly come out of them, as *Job* did, *Job* 40. 4. *Behold* (ſaith he) *I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer? I will lay my hand upon my mouth: once have I ſpoken, but I will not anſwer: twice, but I will proceed no further.*

3. *This would turn our eye* (in the days of our afflictions) *upon our hearts*, and make men think of *ſearching and trying their hearts, and turning again unto the Lord.* While men think of their afflictions as ſpringing out of the ground, and ariſing meerly from the duſt, the natural accident of their frail bodys, which being duſt, muſt be crumbled again to duſt by ſuch means, they only look to the Phyſician for a repair of their lapſed health; while they only eye their troubles as ariſing from men, they look for nothing but a Buckler to defend themſelves, or ſome cudgel to threſh their adverſaries with, requiting them for the evil they have done them. But when they come once to ſee God in their afflictions, and to look upon them as coming from a Divine hand, from the great God of Heaven and Earth, then they begin to

smite upon their thighs, and to say, *What have we done?* Let this be therefore our business, of what kind soever our Affliction be.

Use 2. In the second place, let not this only engage us to own God as the author of our evils of punishment, but also to *apply our selves unto God* as to him who alone can help us in our times of trouble. Nature directs it; how ready are we in our bodily pains and afflictions to cry out —*O God help me*, &c. I remember the saying of our Divine *English* Poet.

> *My heart did heave, and there came forth, My God;*
> *By which I knew that thou wert in the rod.*

The word of God directeth it. *Is any man afflicted, let him pray*, saith the Apostle. *Call upon me* (saith God) *in the day of trouble*, and I will deliver *thee* and *thou shalt praise me*. This was the practice of the Saints in all times. It was *Asa's* fault in his Affliction, that *he sought unto Physitians more than unto God*; it is the condition upon which help, and deliverance is promised, be the *species* of the trial, and affliction what it will.

Use 3. In the last place, let us learn from hence, instead of quarrelling at Divine Providence and Justice in afflicting, *so to behave our selves under our troubles, as we may see cause to bless God for them, and to admire Divine goodness in them. Nazianzene* telleth us a story of one *Philagrius*, who in his affliction brake out into this expression, *Gratias ago tibi Pater! tuorumq; hominum conditor, qui nos invitos, & reluctantes beneficiis afficis, & per externum hominem purgas internum*; that is, *I thank thee, O Father, and maker of man thy servant, for that thou dost us good against our wills, and while we reluct to it and by the outward, purgest the inward man.* And I have read a remarkable passage of *Plinius Secundus* (an Heathen too, in an Epistle of his to *Maximus*) *The sickness of a friend* (saith he) *hath lately informed me, that we are best when we are weak for who is there, who while he is sick is covetous*, or *proud*, or *wanton, who then serveth his amours? who is ambitious? Then* saith he *a man remembreth that there is a God, and that he is but a man, then he admireth none, envieth none, despiseth none; then he neither heareth nor carrieth false tales. O* (saith he)

that

that we could be as well, when we are well as when we are sick. This is that I could wish too. But the worst is, we are very religious, and innocent when we are in affliction, but when we are got out of the net we are as foolish, and wanton as before. God by *trouble* and *affliction* for the time doth us good, *Subtilissima ejus beneficia* (saith an ingenious Author) *Sponte dantur sed non sponte recipiuntur.* But for the most part, that goodness proveth like a *morning-dew.* But in order to the improving trouble, and affliction, let me only commend to you four things with which I shall shut up my discourse on this argument.

1. The first is *Meditation.* Affliction is a seasonable time for much Meditation. It is a fit time for thee to meditate wherefore it is that God contendeth with thee, *Job* 10, 2. *I will say unto God do not condemn me, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* The time of affliction is a fit time, when *man sits alone, and keepeth silence*; and the noises and hurries of the World do not disturb him, to be thinking what he hath done, communing with his own heart upon his bed; and certainly this will have a good influence upon thee, if thy sickness will make thee avoid eating a dish of meat for the time to come; which appeareth to thee, the proximate cause of thy disease, surely it will lay some Law upon thee as to the favouring of such lusts, which appear to have been the more remote cause provoking God in that dispensation against thee. It is also a fit time for thee to *meditate of the vanity of all the contentments of the world.*

Non domus & fundus non eris acervus & auri,
Ægroto domini deduxit corpore febrim.

Experience then teacheth a man. That *Riches profit not in the day of wrath*; all a mans house, and Land, and Gold, and Silver, will not relieve him in a Fever; what a pitiful thing is *beauty*, or *strength*, which one fit of sickness depriveth us of, what a lamentable excrement is *well set hair*; which a cough turns into baldness? what vain things are fine clothes, which in sickness are exchanged for rags? It is a seasonable time also for thee to meditate of Divine goodness, what a mercy it is that the *Rattle snake* hath a *rattle*; The *Tyger*, another beast to give warning of 'its being near? that thou hast diseases to put thee in remembrance of thy latter end? It is a fit time also for thee to meditate of the power of Divine wrath?

2. *Vow unto God in the day of thy trouble*; *Jacob* did so, *Gen.* 28.20. So did *David*, Psal. 132.2. *Lord* (saith the *Psamist*) *remember David and all his afflictions, how he sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. Jonah* did so, *Jonah.* 2.9.

3. But then *remember to pay thy vows. Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God*, Psal. 76.11. Better you should not vow, than that you should forget to pay what you have vowed. This were to snare thy self in the words of thy own lips.

4. To this end (lastly) *Pray that you may keep your sick-bed impressions upon your hearts.* In your troubles, you had thoughts of your eternal state upon your hearts, then you were thinking what you should do if you should be called to Gods judgment-seat. Then you were saying, If I live, I will be another man, I will keep Sabbaths better, be more in Prayer, more in reading, and hearing the word, more watchful over my heart, more careful of my ways, more conscientious in my dealings, more strict in my Family. If ever I recover, I will by the grace of God never be so worldly, so carnal as I have been: well thou art recovered, now pray that thou mayest fulfil thy vows, and that these impressions may not be off thy heart for ever.

SER-

SERMON XXXIX.

Job 5. 6, 7.

Although Affliction cometh not forth of the duſt, neither doth trouble ſpring out of the ground.

IS *there any evil in the City*, and *I have not done it?* (ſaith God by his prophet *Amos.*) The interrogation is an undoubted *Negation*; *Vain man would be wiſe, though* (ſaith *Job* ch. 11.12.) *he be born like a wild Aſſes colt.* Hence it employeth it ſelf in traducing the equal ways of God, as if they were unequal. Hence he ſaith how can that God who is infinite in goodneſs, be the Author of evil? *Is it good for him to oppreſs, to deſpiſe the work of his hands?* Job 10.2. In my laſt diſcourſe I ſhewed you that it was conſiſtent enough with the goodneſs of God to be the Author of the evil of puniſhment. We look upon a ſtaff in the water, and it appeareth to us crooked, when the fault is not in our ſtaff, but only in the weakneſs and imperfection of our ſight, and the unquietneſs of the water; pull the ſtaff out of the water, and look upon it by a due *medium*, and that is ſtraight. We look upon things with blood-ſhotten Eyes, and they appear of ſtrange colours but when our Eyes are rectified, then we ſee them in their true and native colours. We look upon a ſtar at a diſtance, and it appears to us as a ſpark, or a very ſmall body of light, when indeed it is a great Globe; we ſee a little man ſtanding by a Dwarf, or Pigmy, he appeares of a great ſtature to us, remove the little body from him, and then you ſee his true dimenſions.

1. *Gods ways of Providence, as apprehended by our imperfect and weak reaſon, are ſeen like a ſtaff in the water.* The ways of God are right ways, but we have a very imperfect faculty of arguing, judging, and concluding; and can ſee them no other-

wiſe

wise than our lapsed reason represents; this makes us call them crooked.

2. Our hearts are also *vitiated*, and blood-shotten, with *lust*, *prejudice* and *passion*, and this makes the ways of God appear to us in strange colours; when once a Christian hath cleared his *Eye-sight* with Gods *Eye-salve*, then he seeth them as they are; and having quitted himself of lust and prejudice, he findeth no difficulty to conclude them *holy*, *just*, and *good*.

3. The wisdom of God in the ways of his Providence, is like the Sun or Moon in the firmament, which are vastly great bodies, but appear to us but small Globes, and full of spots, by reason of our distance from them. *Who can by searching find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection? it is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? deeper then Hell, what canst thou know? the measure thereof is broader then the Earth, and longer then the Sea*, Job 11.7,8.

4. We look upon the great God *in his ways, and motions of his Providence, as standing by our reason*, and *fancy*, and compare his wisdom with ours, measuring the Divine reason and actions, by our yard-wand, and the wisdom of God seems to us a deformed crooked thing, but let our natural reason be rectified, and sublimated, and once Sanctified by Divine grace; let our minds be enlightened by the Spirit of God, and we shall then see things clearly as they are. These are the general causes of mens misjudgings and misapprehensions concerning the Equity of Gods ways. But let God be true, and every man a lyar: let him be holy, and let what will become of mans reason and judgment. It is bad Logick, but it may be good Divinity sometimes, to hold the conclusion, when we cannot deny the premises which seem to argue against it. There goeth a story of *Melancthon*, that being once pressed by *Eccius* the *Papist* with an argument, to which he had not an answer ready, he took time, and said, *Cras Respondebo*; that he would the next day give answer to it. It may be a Christian may sometimes be put hard to it in his thoughts to solve all the *Phænomena's*. Which a subtle Sophister will make appear upon the ways and motions of Divine Providence, but in this case let him hold to the conclusion, and say I am sure the *Judg of the whole Earth cannot do unjustly*; however it be, *God is holy*, and *just*, and *good*, I will study an answer to this Objection. *Socinus* some where saith, that if he should meet with any thing in Scripture which

which were contrary to his reason, he would not believe it to be the sense of Scripture. Proud man! Must he think to measure infinite wisdom with his bucket, and to scoop out the Ocean of wisdom that is in God, with his spoon? How much better had it been said I believe what God hath said, and I will study to reconcile it to my reason if I cannot do it, I will rather deny my own reason than the *Revelation* of the Divine will and wisdom. *Luther* I think was in the right when he would have the Christian say, *Tu Ratio stultaes, audi verbum Dei & tace:* Thou, reason, art a fool, hear the word of God, and hold thy peace. But to proceed yet further in my discourse. You have heard it is not inconsistent with the purity, and holiness of the Divine being to be the Author of evil of punishment. Because evils of punishment, are indeed no evils, only so miscalled by us. They are great goods to the people of God. But once more *vain man that would be wise*, the man of reason that thinks he can shew us a mote in the Sun, or a crooked angle in the straight lines of Divine wisdom, comes forth and saith.

Quest. *Supposing it consistent with the purity, holiness, and goodness of God, to bring evils of punishment upon men, who he knows will be made better by them, and be helped by those little Hells to escape greater, and by much tribulation be fitted for the Kingdom of God; yet what is this to those whom God knows will never be made better, never be made conformable to the image of his Son.* If these evils of punishment, are *true* and *perfect evils how can an holy God be the Author of them?*

1. I answer. We must grant, that there are some stones in the Earth, that no hewing will fit to make *pillars for the house of God.* God by his Providence may knock them in pieces, and by afflictions break them, but *afflictions* and troubles shall never mend them: and indeed this is an ordinary observation, as *Fire* softneth wax, but *hardneth clay*, so affliction which often makes the people of God better, ordinarily make wicked men worse, they come out of the fire worse than they went in, *Pharaoh* was such a one, ten plagues one after another, wrought no change in his heart but for the worse, he was more hardned than he was before, *Ahaz* was such another, who when he was afflicted, yet did more wickedly; the Scripture sets a brand upon him for it. *This is that King* Ahaz, and we have too too many instances of such in the age, and generation in which we live.

2. Again

2. Again, what if some be afflicted, who grow worse, and get no good by their Afflictions, yet may not God use means that have *a rational tendency to their good?* Trouble and Affliction is the voice of God unto the worst of men, crying to them for repentance and reformation; they will not *hear the rod*, must not therefore God use it? Or doth it not speak when he useth it? What if God knoweth that affliction will do them no good, but give them occasion further to harden their hearts; is God bound by his Providence to act according to his own Omniscience or counsel? God deals with men who are reasonable creatures in a reasonable way, one while perswading and exhorting, another while chastising and correcting; shall not God by his Ministers perswade all men to repent, and to believe, because he knoweth from Eternity who will or will not obey those precepts? Shall not God by his rod teach men to repent and believe, because he hath determined not to give special grace to all? certainly it is but reasonable, that God should allow them reasonable means in order to what he requireth of them, though he knoweth they will make no use of them; in their not doing so, they at least render themselves inexcusable.

3. This Question proceedeth upon a grand mistake, *viz.* That *all punishment* is εἰς νουθεσίαν, for the *amendment of the person punished*; and that if such an end cannot be propounded, or shall not be obtained, Punishments are things not reconcilable to the holiness and goodness of God. This now is a very great mistake, and not only contrary to Divinity, but to the reason of human Policy. It will the more Illustrate this matter, and make the way of God in this appear more easy and plain, if I shew you,

1. That *all men agree, that the amendment of the offender*, is not the only *end of punishment*, but there are other ends for which the *wisdom of man* judgeth *punishments necessary*.

2. That as to God *Reason* holds *much more, and the Scripture hath revealed other ends which he aimeth at in punishment, than the amendment of the person offending, which are highly consistent with his holiness and justice. Seneca*, a great (*Pagan*) Philosopher, mentions three ends in punishments. 1. *The amendment of the person offending.* 2. *The security of others who may be in danger by his lawless sinful courses.* 3. *The amendment of others.* It is true there is a *punishment*, the end of which is only the amendment of the person

perſon offending. Thus Parents puniſh their Children, Maſters their Scholars and Servants: to this purpoſe Magiſtrates uſe whippings, brandings, houſes of corrections, goals, *&c.* But theſe kinds of puniſhments cannot reach unto death; becauſe there can be no amendment of a perſon after the determination of his Being. It is true, *ſinners* by being cut off ſometimes, are ſtopt from further ſinning; but properly, none can be ſaid to be made better by being put to death; and if there were no other end of puniſhments dictated by humane reaſon, than the amendment of the perſon offending, humane Laws could ordain no capital puniſhments: But the wiſdom of the Politicians of the world, we ſee hath ordained capital puniſhments for ſome *offences*, and ſome offenders; yea, and degrees of torment in death, according to the degree of the offence. Amongſt us, in caſe of *Treaſon*, Malefactors are *hang'd*, *drawn* and *quartered*; in caſe of *murther*, and other Felonies, they are beheaded, hanged, burnt, *&c.* and we ſhall find this wiſdom of men juſtified by the ſupreme Wiſdom of God, who ordained capital puniſhments for divers offences, as you read in the Law of *Moſes*. Although therefore the amendment of the *offender* be one great end of puniſhments, for as much as deliberate, and ordinary acts of naughtineſs, beget in us a further proneneſs and inclination to them, and beget ill habits in us; puniſhments are ordained, the ſmart of which, may wean us from the pleaſure which ariſeth to us from ſinful acts: but though this be one, and that a great end of puniſhment; yet it is not the only end for which the wiſdom of man teacheth him to make uſe of them. There are others, ſuch as are, *The vindication of the authority of the ſuperior from contempt*, the amendment of others, the *ſecurity* of others, *&c.* It is indeed true, That man not being his own end, can do nothing rightly, but what he doth for ſome good out of himſelf; there muſt be ſomething out of himſelf, for which he acteth, and that ſomething muſt be good, or his action will be evil and bad: But it is not neceſſary, that this *good* which he makes his end in puniſhment, ſhould be the amendment and reformation of the party puniſhed: If it were, he could never puniſh with capital puniſhment. Beſides, there is a *twofold greater good* than this, which he may aim at. 1. The *glory of God*, and the vindication of the Divine Majeſty. 2. The *good either of the whole body of the political ſociety, with which he is betruſted, or ſome conſidera-*

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ble a part of them. Hence it is, that *Magistrates* rightly cut off *Blasphemers* for the vindication of the glory of God, as well as for the example of others: and cut off *Murtherers* for the security of other mens lives, as well as in execution of the Divine Law concerning such offenders. But

2. Let me shew you, that as to *punishments inflicted by God*, Reason holdeth much more; and as the Scripture revealeth, so Reason justifieth other ends which he both proposeth, and obtaineth in the punishment of sinners, to whom affliction doth no good in order to their amendment and reformation. Let me a little open this.

Grotius de jure belli, l. 2.

1. It is truly said by a learned Author, That *Gods actions may be right, though they have no other end beyond themselves.* Mans cannot be so, he must act for some end, some good end, and that must be out of himself; but the case is otherwise as to God; he is his own end, and may punnish a sinner for no other end than that he may be *revenged* upon him. *He hath made the wicked for the day of wrath*, Prov. 16. 4. and saith that Author, The Scripture declaring, that God takes a pleasure in his vengeance upon sinners, that he will *mock at their calamity*, and *laugh when their fear cometh*: as also the last judgment, are all evident demonstrations of this. Now, supposing this to be true, it is apparent enough, that Gods bringing evil and trouble upon such sinners, concerning whom, he knoweth that they will never be amended by their troubles, but made worse; is reconcilable enough to the purity, holiness, and justice of God. *I will* (saith God) *get me glory upon Pharaoh.* I told you in my last Exercise, that if there were no other *good* that came from evils of punishment, than the predication and magnification of the justice and holiness of God; yet that were enough to warrant the entituling of God to be the efficient cause and Author of them: The making of Gods Power and Justice known, the vindication of his Soveraignty and Holiness, is a noble effect of Divine Providence. Now, where God doth not obtain the reformation and amendment of the sinner, yet he obtaineth this, he gets himself glory upon the poor wretch which actively refused to give him glory. Divines and Philosophers too truly say, That in punishments, *Respicitur, aut utilitas ejus qui peccavit, cujus interierat peccatum non esse, aut indistincte quorum libet*; that is, there is always a regard had, either *to the good of the offenders,*

fenders, or to the good of some others, whose interest it had been not to have had the offence committed. Supposing God not always in punishments, to have a respect to the good, and amendment of the sinner that is punished, which is most certainly true, as to the punishment; yet he hath respect unto another, and that a far greater good, the glory of his own great name. Now certainly, it is consistent enough with the holiness, justice, and goodness of God, to act for the glory of his name, though it be to the prejudice and ruine of his creature; considering that it is such a creature, as by his rebellions hath reproached the Sovereignty of his maker: but this is but one *good* which God obtaineth by those punishments.

2. Again, God by the *punishment of sinners*, though he obtaineth not their amendment and reformation, obtaineth yet another more *Universal good*; and that two ways. 1. In the reformation and *preventing at least the wickedness of others*. 2. In the *upholding of the government and discipline of the world*. This is one end of punishment by mens Laws; therefore are some malefactors hang'd up in chains by the way-side, that all who pass by, may take notice, and be afraid of *committing such wickedness*. God by punishing and troubling sinners, strikes a terror into the hearts of others, that if he pleaseth not to sanctifie their affliction to their salvation; yet by it much sin is hindred in the world, from whence his name had been dishonoured. Yea, and Lastly, *Government* and discipline is in some measure kept in the world, and Gods *authority* is upheld: These ends now God obtaineth in the punishment of the vilest and worst of men; though it may be they, instead of being reformed and amended, do but *blaspheme*, because of their plagues; yet others seeing them, are afraid, and take heed of such courses. O! what a place of *murthers*, and frauds, and beastly lusts, and all sorts of disorders would the sordid passions of men make the world, were it not for the troubles and afflictions with which God followeth some sinners! for though some are to be corrected and restrained by nothing; yet doubtless multitudes of people are at least restrained by the exemplary vengeance which they see God taking upon some sinners, either immediately by his own hand, or by the hands of magistrates, who do not bear the Sword in vain, but are *a terror unto evil doers*. Now let us but consider the great God, as *willing his own glory*, and that in every attribute, that of justice, as well

as that of mercy; or consider God as the great and mighty sovereign of the world, whose interest it is to keep up his authority amongst men, and an awe and reverence of those rules which he hath pleased, to prescribe for the regulation of mens lives: Or as he is a most pure and holy God, offended and injured by the sins of men, whose concern it is to restrain the exorbitancies of creatures; or finally as an only wise and prudent governor, to whom it belongeth so to carry himself (observing rules of justice still) towards individuals, as may best conduce to the peace, good, and tranquillity of the whole. I say, which way soever an intelligent person doth consider God, it appears but an exceeding reasonable motion of Providence, that he should plague and chastise some sinners, though he knows they will get no good; but instead of being amended, will be made worse like *Ahaz*.

Use 1. Let us observe from hence (in the first place) *how just and reasonable the ways of Divine Providence are. O house of Israel* (saith God) *are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?* The reason of our quarrellings at the motions of Divine Providence, is our weighing them with false weights, and a deceitful ballance, or our superficial and perfunctory consideration of them. The truth is, we do ordinarily accuse God as inequal in those things, wherein he acteth after the manner of men, whose equity yet we never question; we will allow the Potter to have power over the clay, and to make this piece of clay a vessel of dishonour, and that a vessel of honour; yet we will not allow the Lord of the whole earth, the *Potter* to the whole world of men, who are but so many pieces of clay in his hand to do the like: we will allow a soveraign Prince a power to kill, and to save alive whom he pleaseth; but we will not allow that Princes maker to have the same *jus absolutum*, the same soveraign power, though it be granted, that he never executeth it, but upon the demerits of his creature: we can allow an earthly Prince a power to punish Wives for the errors of their Husbands, and to disinherit Children for the treasons of their Parents; but we think it much to allow a power to God justly to punish relations for the sins of their correlates. We can understand the justice and reasonableness of men in punishing some malefactors, with such punishments, as leave no room for repentance and amendment; but must call Gods justice, holiness and goodness in question, if he doth but

the same thing we do every day. But O you sons of men! are not the Lords ways equal? Let us learn under tremendous dispensations of vindicative justice, to lay our hands upon our mouths, to acknowledg and confess the Lords righteousness, and instead of disputing the issues of Divine Justice, to adore them, and fulfil the Lords ends in them.

Use 2. This in the second place, may shew us one *cause of rejoycing in the executions of Divine Justice, upon mischievous, and incorrigible sinners.* The truth is, it speaketh both an ill temper, and worse Christianity, to rejoyce meerly in the evils that befall the worst of men. Charity wisheth well unto all, and obligeth men to mourn with those that mourn. But upon other accounts, the cutting off of sinners is matter of joy. *Psal.* 58. 10, *The righteous shall rejoyce when he seeth the vengeance, and he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.* Gods coming with *vengeance* is made the matter of a promise, *Psal.* 35. 4. It hath been made the matter of Gods peoples prayer, *Jer.* 11. 20. *But, O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause;* so *Jer.* 20. 12. And certainly it is also matter of praise, and thanksgiving, and that upon more accounts than one.

1. *As God, by it, gaineth the glory of his justice, and gets himself honour.* Gods glorifying of himself, and making his name great, is what the people of God ought continually to rejoyce in. We see sometimes persons, and parties in the world, opening their mouths against Heaven, and bidding a bold defiance to the God that reigneth there, and daring Divine Justice a long time; we cannot but stand and tremble at it. The patient God at last taketh these wretches so doing, and cuts them off in the midst of their bold defiances. They have it may be some years, as complements of their discourse, challenged God to damn them, and the Devil to take them; God at length falleth upon them, teareth them in pieces, makes them to know there is a God in Heaven that judgeth the earth. Now when the righteous man seeth this vengeance, he hath reason to *rejoyce*, that God hath made known himself, vindicated his glory, *&c.* It is matter of trouble to them, to see any go down into the pit; but it is matter of rejoycing, that by this they are made to know that *there is a God.*

2. As

2. As *God by it fulfilleth his word.* All a good Christians comfort and hope is laid up in the Scriptures, and he is highly concerned in the truth of them; if they be true, he is well enough; if they be not, he hath trusted in a lye. The Scriptures are very full of threatnings of Divine Vengeance against impenitent sinners. Now it is a great temptation to the People of God, to question all the Scripture saith, when they read it full of threatnings and revelations of Divine Wrath against blasphemers, persecutors, oppressors, and bloody men; and yet see the world full of such vile miscreants, and them prospering, daring God to vengeance, and yet having their houses safe from fear. But when they see God after some months and years of patience, hanging up these wretches in chains, cutting them off it may be in the strength of their years; however in their full career of persecution and mischief, with their *oaths*, *curses*, and *blasphemies* in their mouths; there they see God *fulfilling his word:* and this is matter of joy and rejoycing, though that such souls are gone down into the pit, is a lamentation to them, and shall be for a lamentation.

3. It is matter of *joy and thanksgiving*, as they are *secured by it from those evils which they felt from those men:* Every good man hath reason to be thankful to the judg, for doing justice upon such as are notorious murtherers, high-way men, firers of houses, *&c.* because his life, his goods are by it in a measure secured. Every good man hath reason to rejoyce, and to bless God when he cuts off *Sons of violence*, *men of blood*, *persecutors*, &c. as their peace and quiet is by Divine Justice secured. Who will not say, that *Joseph* had reason to bless God, when he told him, He might now again return into his own Countrey, *for those were dead which sought the young childs life*, Mat. 2. It is said of the man according to Gods own heart, 1 *Sam.* 25. 39. *And when David heard that Nabal was dead*, he said, *Blessed be the Lord that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal.* An Heathen Philosopher puts mischievous men in the same rank with Foxes and Serpents, and defends mens natural right to destroy them. I am sure it is matter of rejoycing, when God keeps us from private revenge, and lets us see his vengeance upon them.

4. Again, It is matter of *praise* and *rejoycing*, *as God by this means upholds the discipline and government of the world.* We ought to rejoyce, and to give thanks unto God for all those acts

of his Providence, by which the world is kept in order, and preſerved from running into that confuſion, into which the exorbitancies of mens luſts and paſſions, and the remiſſion of the reins of government by Magiſtrates, ſometimes would preſently hurry it, if it were not for ſome extraordinary acts of Divine Juſtice, by which God layeth a law upon men, and ſtrikes a terror into them. It is therefore a great miſtake for any to think they may not rejoyce upon occaſion of the ruine and downfall of the Churches Enemies. It is true, in the ruine of others none ought to rejoyce. But in the Vindication of Gods glory upon them, in the deliverance of his people from them, in Gods fulfilling of his word in their deſtruction, in the preſerving and upholding the peace, government, order, and diſcipline of the world, put out of order by them, they ought to rejoyce, and heartily to praiſe God for them.

Uſe 3. In the third place, *Hath God other ends to be obtained in the puniſhment of wicked men, beſides their amendment and reformation?* Let us *endeavour then, that he may obtain them.* That a ſinner by his trouble and afflictions ſhould be amended, reformed, and made better, muſt be the product of his perſonal endeavour, with Gods bleſſing upon it. But for thoſe other ends I mentioned, we may contribute to Gods obtaining of them, when at any time we ſee any ſuch tremendous diſpenſations, as Gods *ſubverting wretches in their heaps of ſin*, making ſome dreadful examples of his vengeance.

1. Let us firſt give God the glory of his *Juſtice*, and *Truth*, and *Goodneſs*, reflecting upon theſe Attributes of God in our Meditations, ſpeaking of them unto others. Do you ſee God executing vengeance upon ſome ſinners (for he doth not make all examples of his wrath)? but do you ſee him at any time remarkably puniſhing ſome notorious tranſgreſſors? Be thinking with your ſelves, Oh how righteous a God is our God? who ſhall not fear before him? how true is his word? I have had ſometimes Atheiſtical thoughts, and been ready to think God is not ſo ſevere againſt ſin, as I have heard; or his word is not ſo certain and faithful: but, as I have heard, ſo I now ſee in the dealings of God, he hath ſaid, *Blood-thirſty and deceitful men ſhall not live out half their days.* Lo here men of violence, blood-thirſty, cruel men, perſecutors of the People of God, cut off in their

their youth, in the heighth of their age, and be speaking to your children, to your servants, to your friends, of the Justice and Truth of God upon such occasions: you have heard that God doth many times execute vengeance upon sinners, that he might get glory upon them; that being they would not actively glorify him, he might fetch his glory out of them; and he may be taken notice of in the world as a just and righteous God, and as a pure and holy God, of purer eyes than to behold any iniquity; and as a mighty and powerful God, that is able to break in pieces the proudest and stoutest rebels, that set themselves in opposition to him.

2. Let us *take example* and *warning from the harms of others.* This is one end that man aims at in his punishments, to make others afraid of committing the same things: and this is one thing which (as you have heard) God aims at. It was Gods command, *Deut.* 13. 11. that those that tempted others to Idolatry, should be stoned to death, *vers.* 9, 10. God in this could not propound the good or reformation of the person so stoned. Well, what doth he then aim at? *Vers.* 11. *And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and do no more any such wickedness:* you have the same thing in the case of the *Rebel*, that should do any thing presumptuously, *Deut.* 17. 13. *And all the people shall hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously:* you see this is one thing God aims at in punishing notorious sinners; and indeed, what he doth most generally aim at, where the punishment reacheth to death, especially if sudden; for although it be truth, that that God who had mercy upon the theef upon the Cross, may have mercy upon a profligate notorious wretch in the last hour, yet there is little hopes of it: but I say, in such punishments, undoubtedly next to the vindication of his own glory, the great end which God aimeth at, is the terror and affrightment of others, that they may hear, and fear, and do no more wickedly. Let us therefore make it our business so to improve such Providences, that God may have his end upon us, by our hearing, seeing, fearing, and avoiding those sins against which we see the wrath of God so remarkably revealed: Thou seest in the world debauched drunkards, filthy adulterers, profane Sabbath-breakers, prodigious blasphemers, mischievous *Nimrods*, great hunters, and persecutors of such as fear God; some of them (it may be) young men, some with numerous families, others of fair estates, *&c.* healthy bodies

bodies like enough to have lived in the world many days. On a sudden with *David*, Psal. 73. 18. *Thou seest them cast into destruction*, brought into a destruction, *as in a moment, utterly consumed with the Lords terrors*; thou seest them *written* childless, or with *Ananias* and *Saphira* struck dead; thou seest them as *David*, *Psal.* 37. saw the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; by and by he passed away, and lo he was not; thou soughtest him, and he was not found; thou seest them, their families, their estates, consuming *like the fat of lambs, into smoke consumed away.* This age (if you observed it) hath afforded you many such sights: how many young wretches have you seen cut off in the beginning and strength of their years! Knots of *Hectors* (as this age calls them) in whose constitution nothing could be seen, but that they might have out-lived hundreds of us, and in a few years they are tumbled into their graves: you seek for them, and not one of the old brood found. O let all of us *hear*, and *fear*, and take heed of those leud courses, which God hath in our sight so revenged upon them. It is one end of these severe punishments of God, that others should learn righteousness. Let us by these warnings be startled, and take heed of those sins in which they lived, and which we may reasonably judg brought this quick vengeance upon them.

Use 4. Lastly, Doth God sometimes *punish sinners, who he knoweth will but be worse, not at all amended by his rod:* And is this consistent with his *Holiness* and *Justice*? O let *every one of us then that hath been afflicted, or that shall fall under the afflicting hand of God in any kind, make it our business to search what Gods end was in his afflicting us, whether he aimed at our good, or meerly his own glory, and the good of others.* Let me tell you, it will be a very sad reflexion for us, to reflect upon Gods visiting us with some grievous sickness, or punishing us in our estates and relations, *&c.* and not to be able to satisfy our selves, that God aimed at more in his bitter Providences, than the getting himself glory upon us, or the bettering of others; for there is none comes out of an affliction, but he comes out better or worse, more hardned, or with a more softned and tender heart, more holy, or more profane and stupid. But you will say to me, How shall we be able to make up this Judgment? who knows the aims and intendments of a man in action, but the spirit of a man that is with-

in him? and who knows the aims and intendments of God, save only God himself? I answer, *God is never frustrated of his end*; man may, as not being able to accomplish it, God cannot. 'Tis easie therefore to know the Counsels of God concerning thee in this case by the effects: *Examine therefore what effects hath thy affliction had upon thee.* Wherein art thou more amended? The amendment of a person upon the sad Providences of God lyes much in these two things, *Repentance and Mortification.* 2. *Having a better heart for duty, and being more diligent in the practice of it.* Search and examine thy soul then upon these two points. Say to thy self, 1. *My soul,* thou hast drank of the waters of *Marah*; God hath dealt bitterly with thee; I have been at the very brink of the grave: I have lost a fair estate, God hath crost me in my dearest relations. What sins have I the more reflected upon for these things? wherein have I been more humbled for the mighty hand of God upon me, or mine? what sin more have I left? am I grown less worldly and carnal? what lust have I got a further victory over? have I a better command of my passions? am I grown meeker? am I more humble? is my spirit more broken? do I see more of my own vileness than I did? have I learned with *Job,* to *abhor my self, and to repent in dust and ashes, to lay mine hand upon my mouth?* Or, 2. *Enquire of thy soul,* wherein by this affliction, either thy habits of the grace, or practice of piety and godliness hath been advantaged; whether thy faith or patience be improved, thy meekness and humility improved, or any of those habits of grace which use to grow under the rod. Enquire of thy self, wherein thou art improved as to the practice of Piety; whether thou hast since thy affliction learned to keep the Lords statutes, to *walk in thy house in a more perfect way.* Give me leave to mind you what you see every day. It is the sign of a decaying plant, not to shoot forth, and look more green, after a shower, much more to wither, and dwindle after it: Afflictions are Gods showres, almost all sorts of people in this Nation, have had great plenty of them within the age we have lived in; the face of Religion amongst us at this day, gives little evidence, that Gods aim in it, was the amendment and reformation of the persons under those troubles and afflictions which they have met with; it concerneth us to look to our selves. If Gods end was only to try what we would be, to vindicate his own glory, his power, justice, and holi-

holineſs upon us, to deter others from the like practices; whatever good may by our afflictions be occaſioned to God in the vindication of his glory, or to others in their learning righteouſneſs, it is but a ſad ſymptom of ruin to our ſelves.

SERMON XL.

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1 Kings XIV. 1.

At that time Abijah the Son of Jerobam fell ſick.
Verſ. 17. *The child dyed.*

I Am opening to you the hard Chapters of Divine Providence, *Actual Providence* juſtifying the Lords ways to be equal, even where they appear leſs equal to our ſenſe and reaſon. I am at preſent diſcourſing the Equity of Punitive Providences. I have here ſhewed you how conſiſtent it is with the Juſtice, Holineſs, and Goodneſs of God, to be the *Author of evil to*, though not in the Sons of men; the Author of the Evil of puniſhment, though not of the *evil of ſin*. I have ſhewed you how conſiſtent it is with the Attributes and Perfections of the Divine Nature, to puniſh and trouble his own people, even ſuch as he hath accepted of a ſatisfaction for their ſins at the hand of his Son, whoſe iniquities *he hath pardoned*, &c. How conſiſtent it is with the Wiſdom, Juſtice, Holineſs, and Goodneſs of God to puniſh wicked men, though he knoweth afflictions will do them no good, but make them worſe, hardening their hearts, and giving them occaſion to blaſpheme, becauſe of their plagues. But we do not only ſee adult, and grown perſons ſmitten of God and afflicted, and thoſe as well ſuch as fear God, as thoſe who have no fear of God before their eyes; but we alſo ſee *children ſmitten of God*, ſuch of whom we ſay, *They have neither done good nor evil*. The Queſtion is,

Queſt. *How this diſpenſation of Actual Providence is reconcileable to the juſtice and goodneſs of God.*

That which blindeth our eyes, and maketh this motion of Providence appear more hard and difficult to be underſtood by us, is the ſuppoſed innocency of children, they periſh oft-times before they come to exerciſe any acts of reaſon. Concerning the *eternal ſtate* of children, dying in their infancy, I ſhall determine nothing, becauſe indeed the Scripture (that I know of) no where determines all ſo dying within the *election of grace*, nor that Chriſt as to all ſuch hath *expiated the guilt of* Adams *ſin*, or *original corruption*; nor *that effectual ſaving grace doth always attend the Ordinance of Baptiſm*, though they be brought under it, which yet many are not. This is a great ſecret what God doth with the ſouls of children dying in infancy. But this is not what I have to do with, what God doth with the ſouls of ſuch we ſee not; we have no ſufficient means to underſtand, and therefore freely leave them to the good pleaſure of God. But we ſee they are afflicted as well as others, they dye as much as others, if not in greater numbers. Shall we ſay the hand of God is not in this thing? Or that their ſickneſſes and deaths are no effects of *punitive Providence*, or vindicative juſtice, but the meer product of a diſordered nature and temper? this were certainly to contradict the holy Scriptures, where we find the afflictions of children made the matter of threatnings, the executions of puniſhments upon them aſcribed to God. God by his Prophet threatned the death of *Davids* child by *Bathſheba*; and of *Jeroboams* child in this Text, ſee *verſ.* 12. The afflictions and troubles of children riſe no more out of the duſt, nor more ſpring out of the ground than others; their *afflictions* come at his command, work at his command, bring forth the iſſues which he willeth them, and are puniſhments as well as the afflictions of more adult and grown perſons. My buſineſs muſt be to reconcile this motion of Divine Providence, to Divine juſtice and goodneſs. In order to which, I ſhall offer you ſeveral conſiderations.

1. Could I aſſure you, that *all children dying in their infancy, are undoubtedly ſaved*, either as being within the decree of election, and all of them choſen in Chriſt to eternal life before the foundation of the world, or as having their ſhare in the guilt of *Adams* ſin expiated by Chriſt, and their original pollution waſh-

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ed away in his blood, this question were determined, and the objection of no value. It is a priviledged soul that first gets out of the prison of the flesh into the liberty, the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Supposing this, it would be no act of justice and severity, but mercy and goodness of God, to cut off our children from the womb, and from the breasts; to deliver them from the bodily pains and aches, from all other vexations, crosses and disturbances which they shall be sure to meet with in the world; happy, thrice happy is that soul certainly that makes but one leap from the womb into *Abrahams* bosom, that takes but one step into the world, and the next into Paradise: and certainly this is the case of very many; Christ hath told us, that of *such is the kingdom of God*: if all such be not there (as to which the Scripture is silent) yet many such are there, all *chosen in Christ are there*. There is good hopes of the *seed of those that fear God*; the Covenant of God is with his people, and with their seed: and how happy are they that can get to Heaven with a *groan or two*, with such a degree of pain and aches, as those little bodies can only bear, and that before their reason is improved by its reflections, to make their pains and miseries more bitter. So that as to all such as are ordained unto life, the case is plain; Divine goodness is eminently seen in giving them so short a passage through the vale of misery, and shewing them a far shorter and nearer way to Heaven, than what more grown persons must go, through much tribulation. Now though I cannot assure you this concerning all, yet I can concerning many, which makes the day of their afflictions and death to be much better than the day wherein it was said of them, *There is a child born into the world*: and surely if the *Thracians* (who were heathens) upon the prospect of no more than the miseries to which humane life is subjected, could alter the common custom of rejoycing at Nativities, and mourning at Burials, into a mourning at the birth of their children, and a rejoycing and triumphing at the death of their friends; we to whom a *life and immortality is brought to light by the Gospel*, and to whom the immediate transition of elect souls out of a state of mortality and misery, into a state of happiness and eternal blessedness, is matter of faith, have much more reason to adore the goodness of God in the present determination of our childrens lives, than to quarrel at Divine Providence for bringing such things to pass, while it doth us, nor ours, any further:

ther harm than depriving us of the little pleasure we take in beholding those pictures of our selves, dandling them in our laps, hugging them in our bosoms, while also this pleasure is embittered to us by a thousand fears, and cares, and sollicitudes, and troubles, for, with, and concerning them. But because I cannot assure you this concerning all, something further must yet be said to vindicate the justice of God in this dispensation.

2. Therefore, I say, the *original sin* of children is enough to justifie God in all his *afflictions of Children*: nor is this, that I know, denied by any valuable or considerable party. It was indeed the opinion of *Arminius*, *That no person was damned, meerly for original sin*; but upon what grounds none of his disciples have been able ever to tell the world, to any satisfaction: and it were strange if they should, when the Scripture saith expresly, Ephes. 2. 3. *That we are by nature the children of wrath*, that is, (certainly) heirs of wrath, and exposed to the wrath of God: and the Apostle tells us Rom. 5. 18. *That by the offence of one man, judgement came upon all to condemnation.* Now when-as all men were by *Adams* sin subjected to wrath and condemnation, and by their *original sin*, children of wrath: what ground hath any to assert that none shall be eternally condemned meerly for *original sin*, would pose the thoughts of any intelligent person, I think. I do indeed know that some tell us, that Christ as to all men expiated the guilt of *Adams sin*, some add also *original sin*; others tell us that is all washed off in Baptism. I want one clear Scripture for any thing of this, but yet *Arminius* never denied (so far as I have read him) *that infants have not upon them the guilt of original sin*, which God may punish certainly, if not with eternal, yet with temporal punishments; for even past and pardoned sins may be thus punished, as I have before shewed you in my Observations upon the motions of Actual Providence. Every infant cometh into the world under the guilt of the first mans transgression reckoned to him, as he was in the loyns of *Adam*, and under the want of original righteousness, with an innate pravity and corruption of nature, averse naturally to all that is good; prone and inclined unto that which is evil. Supposing now what *Arminius* would have, and can never be proved, that God will eternally condemn none meerly for this sin; yet surely he may justly scourge and correct with the utmost punishments short of eternal punishment, even this guilt in children, which have not actually

ally sinned. It was Gods threatning annexed to his Covenant with *Adam*; *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt dye.* Some question how God justified it when *Adam* lived to nine hundred and thirty years before he dyed. Divines therefore expound it, by *eris mortalis*, thou shalt be subject and liable unto death: in the day in which he did eat, he *became mortal*; from that day he began to dye, and was made liable to that change. Every child assoon it cometh into the world eateth of this forbidden fruit, I mean, becomes liable to the guilt of its proparents eating, and so is liable unto death. It is true, the Lord doth not cut off all children, how then should the world be repleniſhed and stand, but yet he cutteth off some for the declaration of his justice: as a Prince, when a whole City or Province is in a rebellion, he will not cut them off all, because he will not waste and depopulate a Country; but he will cut off some for the declaration of his justice. Thus you see this motion of Providence is easily reconcileable to the justice of God upon this hypothesis, that *children are sinners*, and under an original guilt: and if we could be so confident, as some are, that none shall be damned for that sin only, or that it is expiated on the behalf of all, or washed away in Baptism, as to all born within the pale of the Church: Yet nothing hinders but by the same justice by which God punisheth past and pardoned sins, (which I have formerly at large opened to you) God might yet justly trouble and afflict little ones: they might be sick, and they might dye, as *Jeroboams* child mentioned in the Text did; though *vers.* 13. saith of him expresly, *That there was some good thing found in him, towards the Lord God of Israel.* Let this be a second consideration to satisfie you as to the righteousness of God in these dispensations. But I proceed yet further.

3. This motion of Providence seemeth very reasonable, and competent to the wisdom of God. *That he might declare to the world, that he is that God in whom all breath*, he in whom they live, they move and have their being. If we should see none dye but in an old age, we should be ready to think, that our candle never went out but for want of oyl; and should not understand how much we were beholden to God for every hour of life: how much we depended upon him for our daily breath, as well as for daily bread. Now it is but reasonable, that the world should understand God to be the *fountain of life*; that sickness and

and death do not meerly depend upon second causes; but there is a first cause, that is the efficient, the principal efficient cause of these changes, though he useth a variety of second causes: he will therefore suffer irregular motions of humours in children, which shall in them cause sicknesses and death, though they never were surfeited with meats, nor inflamed with drinks. He bloweth out Candles newly lighted, to let us know, that *the issues of life and death are in his hand*, and that the breath of man is not meerly in his own nostrils; and it is but reasonable that God should make himself thus known to us as the God of our lives.

4. Again, this dispensation of Providence is *reconcileable to the goodness of God.* God by this means doth *deliver little ones from the evil to come.* This is the very case in the Text, God was bringing evil upon the house of *Jeroboam*, as he threatneth, *vers.* 10, 11, 12. he intended to *take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung from the earth.* *Abijah* falls sick and dies, and this out of mercy to him that his eyes might not see, nor he have any share in the evil which God was about to bring upon his Fathers house. God gathereth up the Lambs before the storm cometh. It is said of *Babilon*, Psal. 137. *That he should be happy, that should take their little ones and dash them against the stones*: and we read in Scripture of such famines as inforced women to eat their own children. Now God often cuts off little ones in his mercy to them. I might here further add, that God by this dispensation preventeth much sin in those that are thus taken away: But I pass on yet to some further considerations, clearing Gods justice.

5. It is but reasonable that God should do this *to punish the sins of the Parents, and to do them good.* It was one of my observations concerning the motions of *Actual Providence.* That God doth very ordinarily punish Relations in their Correlates, Parents in their Children; and I shewed you the reasonableness of Divine Providence in this motion. It was for the punishment of *Davids* sin, that his child by *Bathsheba died*; and the death of it was threatned by *Nathan* as a part of *Davids* punishment, 2 *Sam.* 12. 14. Possibly God may sometimes do it to abate our affections to our children, and that he might have more of our heart and affections; as the Gardiner cutteth off the suckers which draw too much from the root; and the country Housewife takes away the Calf when it sucketh so much as it leaveth no milk for the pail.

6. *Finally,*

6. *Finally*, Why may not this motion of Providence seem reasonable, *That room might be left in the world.* The world is a great Theatre, in which he hath many to act their parts: God at first lengthned out the lives of the Patriarchs to seven, eight, nine hundred years, that the world might be replenished with Inhabitants. He now shortneth the lives of those that are born into the world, that the world might not be overburdened with Inhabitants. More might be added. By the death and sicknesses of little ones, all are warned to be continually upon their watch, not knowing when the Lord will call for them; every little Bell that telleth us a child is gone soundeth to us, would we but understand it, *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come.* Further yet, God by this dispensation (in which as you have heard he is just) doth mind all of the duty they owe unto their children, to bring them up in the knowledge of the Scriptures, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and particularly not to defer the ordinance of Baptism beyond a reasonable time. It is doubtless Gods ordinance as to children, not only a sign of Gods Covenant, but a *medium* in order to salvation, though efficacious only when God is pleased to make it so, not *ex opere operato*, upon the work done. I have now shewed you the equity of God in this particular way of his Providence.

Use. It is a dispensation under which there are few Parents that are not brought. Let me therefore enlarge a little upon some practical Application of this Discourse, shewing you what may be our duty, reasonably concluded from this dispensation. I shall open to you something of it in three or four particulars.

1. It is doubtless our duty, yea the duty of all flesh, *To be silent before the Lord under such Providences.* The loss of a child, especially if it be a *first born*, or an only child, sometimes goeth very near us. But oh, let us not be tempted from it to open our mouths against the God of Heaven, nor to entertain a thought in our souls derogatory to the justice and goodness of God. Our children are sinners, and obnoxious to the justice of God; God may in justice punish them for their own sins, or for our sins: I hinted to you before, that it was a beam of *Arminius* his new light, *that none should be condemned for original sin only*; and he is followed in it by all the *Remonstrants* in their Confessions, Apo-

logies, as also by others of that tribe: *Socinus* also and his followers shake hands with them in that notion. Yet *Arminius* answering Mr. *Perkins* (who to disprove *Arminius* his doctrine of Gods rejecton of any, because he foresaw they would reject the grace of the Gospel) had pinched him, telling him this could be no cause of the rejection of infants out of the pale of the Church. God could not foresee they would reject the Gospel, who he foresaw should never have the Gospel preached or tendred to them, answereth him thus, *At inquam ego in parentibus, abavis, avis, atavis, trifavis evangelii gratiam repudiarunt, quo actu meruerunt ut a Deo deserantur*. That is, But I say (saith he) they rejected the Gospel in their Parents, their Grandfathers, their great Grandfathers, or former Progenitors. Now how this is consistent with his other doctrine, I cannot understand: for certainly if God may be justified in rejecting the souls of some infants from eternity, because he foresaw that their Great-Grandfathers would reject and refuse the Gospel, when as they by no personal act should do any such thing; he may be justified even in the eternal condemnation of children for the sin of *Adam*, or the personal obliquity and corruption of their natures; and so it is not unrighteous with God eternally to condemn a child for its original corruption only. But we are not now speaking of eternal condemnation, but of bodily and temporal; yea and temporary punishments, which may very well consist with the eternal salvation of the soul: and it is very absurd for us to think, that for such punishments the infant may not be punished (without the impeaching of the justice of God) though it hath been guilty of no actual sin, deserving so early a chastisement of it. Oh, therefore suffer not in such cases your hearts or lips to transgress, God may do it in righteousness. He may thus justly punish original sin in the child; he may justly punish our sins upon the backs of our children. Speak not a word against God in this Providence.

2. *Do what in thee lyeth secondly to find out the cause.* When the *Jews* queried our Saviour concerning the man that was born blind, for *whose sin it was, whether his, or his parents?* Our Saviour answereth them, that it was neither for his sin, nor yet for his Parents, but that the glory of God might appear in that famous miracle, which our Saviour wrought in restoring him to his sight. It is an hard thing to find out Gods ends in his dispensations of punitive Providence; God may sometimes afflict, and take away

little ones for their own sins, for the sin of *Adam*; for the iniquity in which they were conceived, and the sin in which they were brought forth. God may sometimes do it for the *Parents sins*. Sometimes he may do it principally neither for the one, nor for the other of these ends, but for the good of the Parents, or for the good of the Children: you have heard that this motion of Divine Providence, is highly reasonable upon more then one account. But yet when we feel the smart of such a dispensation, we know not how to look upon it otherwise than as a punishment; but now our business under such providences is to enquire, what sin in us God doth in that manner revenge. The Scripture will guide us a little in the finding out of this, and we may possibly find out some other helps, to make us understand these dispensations. It was threatned to *David*, 2 *Sam.* 12. For his sins in the matter of *Uriah* and his wife, and for that by them *he had given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme*. It is one of those common scourges with which God chastiseth some Parents for their sinful lives; and whoso is conscious to himself of a sinful course of life, need not enquire much for what cause God brings him under such dispensations. It is matter of more narrow enquiry why God thus chasteneth his own people. Possibly if they will search narrowly under such a Providence, they may find, if not the very sin for which God contendeth with them, yet some laps of their lives of that nature, as may give them a just ground of jealousy and suspicion, that that is the sin for which God so troubleth them. I shall not be positive in this determination lest, I seem too boldly to inquire into the secret counsels of God: men should do well under these Providences to listen to their own consciences, which oft times tell them the truth in such cases. But let me ask of thee, or rather desire thee to ask thy self, these two or three following Questions.

1. *Didst thou never sinfully distrust the Providence of God concerning thy Children*; And secretly repine, at Gods bounty to thee in them? this is now a temptation incident to such as are of meaner condition in the world, and not so able as others to maintain their Families. God promiseth the fruit of the womb as a blessing; and blesseth him, that hath his quiver full of these shafts, but now the poor man, knoweth not how to understand this; and it is hard for him not to repine at the multiplying of it: a great error doubtless, but such as for ought I know good people may

fall into; we cannot trust God to provide for those which he giveth us, if this hath been thy error, God but pays thee in thy own kind, by shortning thy number, and maketh thy own secret, sinful wish now to be thy Plague and Torment; but this ordinarily is the sin of the poorer and meaner sort of Christians.

2. *Didst thou not let thy heart run out too much upon thy Children?* God is jealous, and it is the nature of jealousy not to suffer a rival in the object beloved, be it a person, or a thing. God is the object, and he will be the prime object of his peoples love, desire, and delight, It is his Law. *Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy strength*; it may be thy Child had more of thy heart, more of thy love and and delight than God had, no wonder if he hath taken it from thee: this is now usually the sin of those whose circumstances in the world are better, they have a fair estate in the world, and Children few enough to leave it to, and in such cases it is a very hard thing to keep our hearts within due bounds; but our affections are ready to overflow, especially if there be nothing in the temper, or behaviour of the Child, that takes off the edge of our affections to it.

3. Doth not thy heart smite thee for the neglect *of thy duty to thy Child*, especially if it were of any years? Thy duty in instructing it, or thy duty in reproving and admonishing it. *Elie's* Sons were indeed men grown, but God cut off his Children; though their personal guilt justified God in his severity against them, yet *Eli* smarted in their punishments for honouring his Sons more than God, for dealing too gently with them for their most enormous wickednesses. Thou mayest also neglect thy duty towards them in instructing them, in making them acquainted with the holy Scriptures; in admonishing them to keep the Lords Sabbaths; and seeing to their external Sanctification of them. This is undoubtedly a second piece of thy duty upon such a dispensation, and to be humbled before God for those sins which thy conscience smiteth thee for, and suggesteth to thee as probable causes of this rod of God upon thee.

3. It is doubtless thy duty, whatsoever thou findest, to be *satisfied with Gods good pleasure.* Rachel *mourned sinfully while she* so mourned as *that she refused to be comforted.* If thou findest that probably God hath punished thy sin, in the sickness, pain, and death

death of thy Child, it is indeed matter of humiliation to thee; it offers thee a just opportunity to resolve for the time to come, to amend thy errors as to any survivors which God shall lend thee: but yesterday cannot be called back again, God hath done what pleased him. It may be in mercy to thy Child, though it be in judgment unto thee, thou hast no reason to quarrel or murmure at God for any of his dispensations. If it be for thy Childs *Original sin*, still thou hast no reason to blame God, he is just and righteous in what he hath done. But if God hath done it to give thy Child a quicker passage to Heaven, to bring it sooner to a state of perfection, to deliver it from an evil to come, here thou hast reason to admire, and adore the Divine goodness rather than to quarrel at Divine Justice. There are a great many things that may conduce to the relief of a godly man or woman disturbed at this dispensation of Divine Providence. It is a very ordinary dispensation of God; though therefore it may look like a digression from the principal argument of my discourse, yet it may possibly be not so judged by some of you, whose case it either at present is, or may be to instance in some heads of arguments, which occasionally you may make use of, for the quieting of your Spirits.

1. *Consider, what-ever was the moving cause on Gods part, yet the will of God is revealed.* The will of God is such a thing to satisfy a Christian with, as nothing can be more, nothing greater. We have our *Heaven by the will of God fear not little flock, it is your Fathers will to give you a Kingdom.* We have all our grace, all our glory from the will of God, and shall we not thankfully accept a cross, when it is the will of our Father to lay it upon our necks? We pray *thy will be done*, and shall we murmure against it when we see it done. This silenced *Aaron*, *David*, *Heli*, *Hezekiah*, it leaves no room for a good Christians reply to it, it is our Fathers will, that is enough. It is our Fathers will revealed by an Act of his Providence. *The Lord hath given (saith* Job*) and the Lord hath taken, blessed be the name of the Lord.*

2. *Consider how many sadder cases than thine there have been.* Thou hast lost a Child, an infant; *Job* lost all his Children when they were grown up, feasting at their elder Brothers house. *Aarons* was a sad cause, he lost his two Sons grown up, in an act of sinning, yet he held his peace. *Helies* case was sad, to lose two such wicked Sons in a Battel. *Davids* case was sad, God

had

had expresly told him *the Child should dye, because of his sin*; and that by it, he had made the enemies of God to blaspheme. What doth *David* do? He fasteth, he prayeth, he humbleth himself before God so long as the Child lived, and while he had any hope; but when the will of God was revealed, when the Child was dead, he ariseth, and eateth bread as he was wont to do, he saith, that he should go to it, it should not return to him.

3. Consider, *Let the case be as sad as it will, yet if thou lookest round about it, there is mercy in it*; either mercy to thy Child, or mercy to thee, or mercy to both: if thy Child be gone to Heaven, there is mercy in that; if it be delivered from evil to come upon the World, or that part of the world where it should have had its portion, there is mercy in that. *David*'s case was as sad as one can well think of any of this nature; yet there was this mercy in it, the living monument and remembrance of *David*'s sin and shame was taken away.

4. Suppose that *God hath for thy sin taken it away*, and thou canst not satisfie thy self but it is so; yet consider, *God eternally punisheth none for the sins of their correlates.* God may punish persons with bodily and temporal punishments for the sins of their Parents, but not eternally; as to those punishments, every soul shall bear no more than its own iniquity. *Arminius* I remember telleth us, that he can see no reason, but that Children may be equally punished eternally for the sins of their Parents, as well as the whole posterity of *Adam* for his sin: but certainly there is a vast difference; the first *Adam* was a *publick person*, with whom God made a Covenant for life or death for himself, and for his posterity; and he had a power as well to have conveyed life as death to all his posterity: but surely none will assert this, as to any Parent since his time.

5. Consider *how much comfort there is laid for parents mourning*, in that speech of our Saviour, *for of such is the kingdom of God.* Men that have large Gardens and Orchards, have places for slips and Inlays, as well as for old Stocks; Nurseries for Plants, as well as places for full-grown fruit-trees. God hath his *garden of Grace* (that is, his Church) and he hath his *garden of Glory*, to both belong Nurseries. The Children of believers are (though imperfect members) yet members of his Church; and they may be heirs of Glory, though they go out of this world under age, as to any earthly inheritance: Yet they may be of full age for the

in-

inheritance that is immortal, incorruptible, and which fadeth not away; they will be of age in that Country where is no infant of days, nor old man of years. The possibility of little Childrens entering into the Kingdom of God, yea the probability that the seed of such as fear God, dying in infancy are so entred, ought to be a wonderful relief to Godly parents mourning upon this account. Some Mothers only people the earth with sinners; God puts an honour upon thee if thou stockest Heaven with Saints, and bringest forth to the kingdom of Glory.

6. Consider, *Thou canst never lose a Child with more hope than in its infancy.* Some have thought that the death of Christ hath as to all expiated the guilt of *Adams* sin; both the *Socinians* and *Arminians* seem so to judge. Others think, that by vertue of the New Covenant, the *water of Baptism* washeth away *original sin*. *Augustine* was called *Durus pater infantum*, an hard Father to Infants, because he thought all unbaptized Infants were damned; by which it seems, he deferred much to Baptism: but I do not remember that I ever read in him, or heard from him, that he held, that *all baptized Infants should be saved, if dying in infancy.* I durst not fix the comfort of mourning Parents upon these foundations: But yet this is certain, the Infant within the pale of the Church, the Child of the believing, the true believing Parent especially, is in Covenant with God: It hath not yet been defiled with wilfull presumptuous sinning; we cannot say so of our Children when they are grown up to years. A godly Parent can never lose a Child with more hopes of its eternal Salvation, than in its infancy.

7. Again, Possibly what God hath done, he hath done in *mercy to thee, to thy soul*, that thy affections may be more entirely upon him. God knew thy heart better than thy self; it may be, by such a stroke he hath secured thy heart more unto himself, it may be in mercy as to the comforts of thy life. *Zedekiah* could better have followed his Children in their infancy to their grave, than have seen them slain by a barbarous enemy before his face. Thou knowest not what evil is coming upon the world.

8. Lastly consider, That for those *that keep the Lords Sabbaths, and chuse the things that please him, and take hold of the Lords Covenant*, God hath, *Isa.* 56. 45, promised *a better name than that of sons, and daughters, even an everlasting name which shall never be cut off.* But I shall digress no further on this Argument.

4. Lastly,

God hath his *garden of Glory*, as

Infant, because he thought all unbaptized Infants were damned; by which it seems, he believed much to Baptism: but I do not remember that I ever read of him, or heard from him, that he

I dare not fix the comfort of deceasing Parents upon the Salvation of their Children: but yet this is certain, the Infant within the pale of the Church, the Child of the believing, the true believing Parent effectually, is in Covenant with God: It hath not yet been defiled with wilful presumptious sinning; we cannot say so of our Children when they are grown up to years. A godly Parent can never have a Child with more hopes of its eternal Salvation, than in its Infancy.

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41. Lastly,

4. Lastly, Having stilled thy impatience, what hast thou to do, but to *fulfil the Lords will and ends under such a dispensation*? Let those do it that are patients under such providences. Let us all do it, who are spectators of them.

Are any of us patients under such Providences, let us fulfil the Lords ends in them. You will say, what are they? I Answer.

1. *Submission to his good will*, is doubtless one thing. God by all afflictions of his people, designeth to *humble*, and *to prove his people, that he may do them good in the latter end.* Such dispensations are the rod of God upon us, and his rod hath a voice, and we are bound to *hear his rod.* God is now trying thy *obedience*; *Abraham*'s trial, was a greater trial: he had but one Child, him a Son, the Child of the promise, God required him to kill him with his own hand, he submitted, and the Lord accepted his will for the deed. Thy hearing the voice of one rod, may prevent the Lords taking of another to scourge thee with.

2. *Humiliation for those sins which thou suspectest to have been the provoking cause of such a dispensation*; that's another end which thou maist probably think that God aimeth at. Afflictions are to *humble us, and to prove us.*

3. *God calleth aloud to thee to take thy heart off thy creature-comforts.* Thou seest what gourds, what blossoms they are, what shadows they are which thou huggest, what lyes thou hast in thy right hand; he calls now to thee to fix thy heart and thine eyes upon him alone, and to make him alone thy portion, to fix all thy delight upon him.

For us that are spectators of such Providences, let us also by them learn wisdom.

1. *By taking heed of such sins, as may provoke God to such dispensations:* we stand concerned if we *love our children,* to love God, and to *fear him*, to walk closely with him; the wicked life of a Parent may shorten the life of a Child, for that God in judgment may write him childless, a man who shall not prosper, nor his name out-live a present generation. Take heed of those particular sins, which may provoke God to such a stroke. Take heed of murmuring at the blessing of a numerous off spring, and distrusting the Providence of God, as to a providing for them. Take heed if Children be given you, that you do not set your heart upon them. Look upon them as fading flowers, and such

flowers as never fade sooner, than while they are worn too near your heart. Take heed of sins by which the enemies of God *shall be made to blaspheme*. *David* for such sins lost his new born Child from his beloved *Bathsheba*.

2. More especially, take heed of *neglecting your children*. *Neglect not the ordinance of Baptism as to them*. I do not think that is damnable; but I do think it is provocative of God. I remember God met *Moses* in the Inn, and was about to kill him for his *omission of Circumcision*. Circumcision was in it self a pitiful thing, but it was Gods ordinance, it was his *Covenant in the flesh with the seed of Abraham*. We are not upon a Divine institution, to say, To what purpose is it? or what good can it do? If the Jewish Child had dyed before the 8*th* day, its want of circumcision doubtless did not endanger its salvation; but the deferring it beyond that time, might for ought I know, endanger the wrath of God upon the Parent, and that wrath might be executed in cutting off the Child. I take the case to be much the same under the Gospel, I am sure the *Covenant* is the same; take heed of neglecting to instruct your Children betimes, or to reprove and admonish them; God may cut them off betimes, and then your neglects will be a grief of heart to you.

Finally, This calleth to all young ones, *not to neglect the remembrance of their creator in the days of their youth*. O let your tender years be no temptation to you, to put off your duty towards God, and your own souls; in the morning of your life, be plowing up the fallow ground of your hearts, and sowing the seed of righteousness; indeed, in the evening our hands should not be slack; but who knoweth whether he shall see an evening, yea or no?

4. Laſtly, Having ſtilled thy impatience, what haſt thou to do, but to *fulfil the Lords will and ends under ſuch a diſpenſation*? Let thoſe do it that are patients under ſuch providences. Let us all do it, who are ſpectators of them.

Are any of us patients under ſuch Providences, let us fulfil the Lords ends in them. You will ſay, what are they? I Anſwer.

1. *Submiſſion to his good will*, is doubtleſs one thing. God by all afflictions of his people, deſigneth to *humble*, and *to prove his people, that he may do them good in the latter end.* Such diſpenſations are the rod of God upon us, and his rod hath a voice, and we are bound to *hear his rod.* God is now trying thy *obedience*; *Abraham*'s trial, was a greater trial: he had but one Child, him a Son, the Child of the promiſe, God required him to kill him with his own hand, he ſubmitted, and the Lord accepted his will for the deed. Thy hearing the voice of one rod, may prevent the Lords taking of another to ſcourge thee with.

2. *Humiliation for thoſe ſins which thou ſuſpecteſt to have been the provoking cauſe of ſuch a diſpenſation*; that's another end which thou maiſt probably think that God aimeth at. Afflictions are to *humble us, and to prove us.*

3. *God calleth aloud to thee to take thy heart off thy creature-comforts.* Thou ſeeſt what gourds, what bloſſoms they are, what ſhadows they are which thou huggeſt, what lyes thou haſt in thy right hand; he calls now to thee to fix thy heart and thine eyes upon him alone, and to make him alone thy portion, to fix all thy delight upon him.

For us that are ſpectators of ſuch Providences, let us alſo by them learn wiſdom.

1. *By taking heed of ſuch ſins, as may provoke God to ſuch diſpenſations:* we ſtand concerned if we *love our children,* to love God, and to *fear him*, to walk cloſely with him; the wicked life of a Parent may ſhorten the life of a Child, for that God in judgment may write him childleſs, a man who ſhall not proſper, nor his name out-live a preſent generation. Take heed of thoſe particular ſins, which may provoke God to ſuch a ſtroke. Take heed of murmuring at the bleſſing of a numerous off ſpring, and diſtruſting the Providence of God, as to a providing for them. Take heed if Children be given you, that you do not ſet your heart upon them. Look upon them as fading flowers, and ſuch

flowers as never fade sooner, than while they are worn too near your heart. Take heed of sins by which the enemies of God *shall be made to blaspheme*. *David* for such sins lost his new born Child from his beloved *Bathsheba*.

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Finally, This calleth to all young ones, *not to neglect the remembrance of their creator in the days of their youth*. O let your tender years be no temptation to you, to put off your duty towards God, and your own souls; in the morning of your life, be plowing up the fallow ground of your hearts, and sowing the seed of righteousness; indeed, in the evening our hands should not be slack; but who knoweth whether he shall see an evening, yea or no?

SERMON XLI.

Rom. I. 26.

For this Cauſe, God gave them up to vile Affections.

MY buſineſs is to clear up the equity of the Lord in the ways of his *Actual Providence*, and to vindicate the juſtice and holineſs of God from thoſe, who by the Sophiſtry of their humane wiſdom, ſeek to darken Divine knowledg. I am reſolving the difficulties relating to the motions of Divine Providence *in punitive diſpenſations*. I have ſhewed you, how juſt and reaſonable it is, that God ſhould be the Author of the *evil of puniſhment*: And that 1. to his own people, notwithſtanding the *ſatisfaction of Chriſt* accepted for them, and the remiſſion of their ſins as to eternal puniſhment. 2. As to thoſe whom yet he knows to be ſuch, as will be worſe for their afflictions, and not better. 3. *As to children* who have not been guilty of actual ſins: I proceed now a ſtep further. God doth not only puniſh ſin with *ſmart*, with pain, diſeaſes, croſſes, *&c.* but he ſometimes puniſheth *ſin* with *ſin*; for ſin, giving men up to be led captive by their luſts. The Text ſpeaketh of ſuch a Providence. It relateth to the Heathens, of whom the Apoſtle had been before ſpeaking, *verſ.* 19, 20, he had been declaring what means they had to know God; they had not indeed the light of the Goſpel, but they had the light of nature. *That which might be known of God was manifeſt in them, for the inviſible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* Then he ſheweth how they abuſed and miſimproved theſe means, for *v.* 21, when *they knew God* (in ſome meaſure, as the light of nature, and works of creation, would diſcover him to them) *they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their ima-*

imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkned; professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image, made like to corruptible man, to birds, to four-footed-beasts and creeping things. The business was this: The Heathens had indeed but an imperfect knowledge of God, no more than the light of nature, and the works of God in nature shewed them; but yet this was enough to have let them know that God could not be like a man, or a beast, or a creeping thing; yet such images and representations of God they made, and worshipped: *wherefore* (saith the Apostle, vers. 24.) *God also gave them up to lusts of uncleanness*, &c. and so again in my Text, vers. 26. *For this cause, God gave them up to vile affections*; and so again, *vers.* 28. And even as they *did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are inconvenient. Being filled with all unrighteousness*, &c. Now the Question is,

Quest. *How it can consist with the holiness and purity of God thus to punish sin with sin; for their committing of some sins to give them up to commit others?*

The difficulty is, because it is hard to conceive how God should do this, without a willing of sin. Although therefore it is plain enough in the Text, and twice more repeated in the Chapter, it be said, *God gave them up to uncleanness*, and God *gave them up to a reprobate mind*: yet it will not be amiss for us from other Scriptures to take some auxiliary help for the proving of this, That there hath been, and doubtless are still such dispensations of God. Then I shall attempt to reconcile these Providences to the *justice, holiness* and *goodness of God*; after that I shall make some application of my Discourse upon this Argument. It is a known Text which you have, Isaiah 6. 9, 10. *Go and tell this people, hear you indeed, but understand not; and see you indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy; and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.* It is a Text which you find quoted six times in the New-Testament, *Mat.* 13. 14. *Mar.* 4. 12. *Luk.* 8. 10. *Joh.* 12. 40. *Act.* 28. 26. *Rom.* 11. 8. In the first place *Mat.* 13. it is said that in them is fulfilled the Prophecy of *Isaias, By hearing you shall hear, and not understand; and seeing you shall see, and not*

perceive. For this peoples heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, &c. That Text plainly makes it out, that Gods judicial giving them over to their blindness, was consequent to their *sinful stopping of their ears, and shutting of their eyes.* But Christ there saith, that *for this* he spake *to them in parables, Mat.* 13. 13. but *Rom.* 11. 8. it is said, *God hath given them the spirit of slumber; eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear*; and certain it is, *Isaiah* had Gods commission, chap. 6. and Acts 28. 26. *Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Isaias the Prophet to our Fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing; and their eyes have they closed.* By all which it clearly appears, that God punished the former sins of the Jews in their wilful shutting their eyes, and stopping their ears against the revelation of the Divine will, by a judicial giving them up to a blindness of mind, and hardness of heart. To this purpose is that, 2 Thess. 2. 11. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lye:* for what cause? vers. 10. *Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* Many other texts there are, speaking of Gods hardning the heart of *Pharaoh*, and the hearts of others; but these are sufficient to evince, that there is such a dreadful dispensation of God. St. *John* reciting the afore-mentioned text of *Isaiah*, *Joh.* 12. 39. saith, *Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaias said again, that he hath blinded their eyes, and hardned their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them.* So, as I say, it is clear there is such a penal act of Divine Providence; and now that we are upon this argument, it will not be amiss for us to enquire what sins those are which provoke God to such a degree.

In the general they were *sins against light*; sins against the light of nature. The Apostle speaketh of such sinning, Rom. 1. *When they knew God, they glorified him not as God*; they knew God by the light of nature, and sinned against that light. All the other texts speak of sinning *against the light of Revelation.* God for mens bold and impudent sinning against natural light, or against the light of his word, doth many times deliver up men in this manner. But the great question is,

Quest.

Quest. *How is this reconcilable to the goodness, purity, and holiness of God?*

God in Scripture doth frequently declare that he delights not in the blood of sinners, his willingness that all should be saved, *&c.* He doth as plentifully declare, that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; that he tempteth no man, and cannot be the author of sin. Now how can God give up men to *blindness of mind*, to *hardness of heart*, without *willing it*? and if he willeth it, how shall he be excused from being the author of it? To which I answer:

1. If we mean by the goodness of God, *his kindness unto sinners in order to their conversion and healing, and being saved; there is nothing of that nature to be expected from God under this dispensation.* It is the seal of reprobation and damnation; those poor souls are left to the judgement and condemnation of the last day, without any great hopes of mercy; they have had their time, their means, their mercies; the patience of God hath a long time waited upon them; their glass is now run out; Gods day of grace is come to an end, as to them: *Lest* (saith God by the Prophet) *they should convert and be healed.* Gods frequent declarations, that he desireth not the death of sinners, do not oblige God for ever to strive with *sinners*, shutting their eyes, and stopping their ears, and hardning their hearts. It is enough that God hath a long time waited upon these sinners, and hath had no fruit of his patience with them. But now if by the goodness of God we understand his *justice, purity and holiness*, so I doubt not but to evidence to you, that under such tremendous dispensations, yet God is a *just, pure and holy God.* To this purpose

2. In the second place let us consider, 1. *What God doth under these dispensations.* 2. *Under what circumstances those sinners are, whom God brings under them.*

Let us understand, *What God doth in these dispensations.*

1. *Negatively*, We say God doth not infuse *any malice into a sinners heart*; this indeed were to make God *the author of sin.* God putteth no malice into the heart of sinners; he excites no malice in their hearts; and this both the *Jesuits* and *Arminians* (who conspire together to reproach *Calvin*, and other eminent servants of God, with the odious reproach of making *God the author of sin*) have been told by as many as have treated upon

on this argument; but they have a mind to revile, *The Lord rebuke them.* This is the meaning of the Schoolmen, when they say, that God doth not harden any, *quantum ad rationem defectus*, but only *quantum ad rationem ordinis.* Now how they should make God the *author of sin*, who freely grant this, they should do well to make us understand: and I would fain have them shew me, where either *Calvin*, or *Beza*, or *Zuinglius*, or *Pareus*, or *P. Martyr*, or any other whom *Bellarmine*, and *Tilenus*, or any other so boldly traduce, as making God the *author of sin*, have said any thing of this nature; they all agree with *Augustine* in saying, that God hardneth none *impertiendo malitiam*: but this only telleth you what God doth not.

2. In the second place, *God doth undoubtedly withdraw those means, which should effectually keep them from such sins*; and certainly this is not unrighteous with God, for he *may do with his own what pleaseth him.* Had not the Lord with-held this grace from the Angels, and from our first Parents, neither had the first fallen from their glorious state, nor the second from the state of innocency; by which it appeareth, that this is no more than the Lord might have done if the sinner had not sinned: to say the contrary, were to make God a debtor to his creature; but this is no more than *Bellarmine* himself, and all the *Arminians* will grant.

3. God doth undoubtedly leave this poor wretch whom he thus punisheth, to act according to the *impetus of his original lust and corruption, according to that lust which is in his heart.* No man can deny but this is consistent with the justice, purity and holiness of God. If for God to leave or suffer men to walk in their own ways, not to quench the original lust which is in their heart, but to suffer them to put it forth in actual sin and wickedness, would make God the author of sin; God must be concluded the author of all that sin which is committed in the world. But it is written, *He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy*, and his grace could not be grace if it were not free. But thus far all are agreed, that God doth harden *negatively* and *permissively.* I hope there is none will doubt, but that if a traytor deserved to dye, and to starve to death, though a Prince had it in his power to pardon him, or supply him with bread to keep him from dying in that manner; yet the Prince were just if he did neither of these, but suffered him to perish according to his deserts; but

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(as I said before) this is denied by none. All the dispute is, whether God doth any *positive act* in the hardning and blinding of sinners: this is denied by *Bellarmine* and the *Jesuits*, and by the *Arminians* also. In opposition to which I say,

4. Though God doth not *positively harden nor blind any sinners*, yet he doth do some *positive acts, that relate to the hardning and blinding of them.* I say he positively hardneth none, he doth not make their *soft hearts hard*, nor positively *blind any*; he doth not *shut their eyes*, and of seeing make them blind. Here now the difference lies betwixt *Bellarmine* with *Arminius*, and those eminent Divines whom they would asperse with this imputation, of making *God the author of sin*, because these Divines cannot allow God to be a meer spectator, an idle looker upon his works of Providence: they insist upon this Argument, which certainly is not to be answered.

In all acts of punishment God doth something positively. But the Scripture mentions *the giving up of some sinners to vile affections*, to a *reprobate mind*, &c. *as acts of punishment.* Therefore God as to them doth something positively. The *minor* is evident from the stile of the Scripture. Now for the *major*, Certainly in all all punishments God acteth as a *Judge*, and therefore must do something positively. The infliction of a punishment, argueth a positive judgement of God. Besides (which is noted by *Pareus*) God is said seven or eight times over to harden *Pharaohs* heart, and many others who never had any grace to be withdrawn. Besides, it is very observable, that the words which the Scripture maketh use of to signifie Gods penal action in hardning sinners, *Exod.* 4. 21. & 7. 3. & 10. 1. are such as cannot be expounded by a *bare permission or desertion*, and signifie a *vehement intension of the action*, being verbs of the second and third Conjugation in the Hebrew. This is a great point in Divinity, let me therefore tell you what our Divines say in their own words, and then examine if it be not reconcileable by our reason to the justice and holiness of God. *Parens* saith, That it is sufficient that God in these tremendous dispensations, acting as a Judge, by way of punishment (which as the Scripture plentifully affirms, so *Bellarmine* himself granteth) God must act in it not meerly privatively but positively; we need not be curious to examine the manner how he acteth. *Sit illa traditio explicabili, sive inexplicabili, vocato quidem, sed semper justo modo*, whether we be able to open,

open, or not open the manner; God doth it always by a just, although a secret judgment; but, saith he, in three things it seems to be explicable: 1. *By leaving men to the* impetus *and force of their own lusts.* This, saith he, is a general way; for all that perish, are thus left to themselves; yet it cannot be said properly of all such, that God hath delivered them up to hardness of heart, &c. 2. *By giving them means of softning; such are precepts, miracles, his works,* &c. *which they through the wickedness of their hearts only use to their further hardening.* Thus it was in the case of *Pharaoh, Sihon,* &c. This on their part was a sin, on Gods part a just judgment; but it may be this is not the case of all, and seemeth hardly applicable to the *Gentiles* whom God so gave up, *Rom.* 1. 26. 3. A third way (saith he) (which is more universal) is *by delivering them up to their lusts, and to Satan,* to be further blinded, seduced, and hardned, as in the case of *Ahab,* and the *Gentiles* mentioned in this first Chapter of the *Romans,* and 2 *Cor.* 4. 4. *The God of this world hath blinded the eyes of those that believe not.* Now that Satan seduceth souls by command from God, appeareth by the story of *Ahab,* 1 *King.* 22. 22, 23. *The Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets.* Another great Divine opens it in these particulars: God (saith he) hardneth sinners,

Alesbury de eterno Dei decreto, p. 226.

1. By immediately *depriving them of reason and counsel, or punishing them, so as their rage is increased against God*; for this he giveth us the instance of *Pharaoh,* whose heart was the more hardened by the plagues which he felt; and for this he quoteth *Gregory* the Great, one of the Popes.

2. God immediately hardneth the hearts of sinners (saith he) *by giving them up to Satan,* that they may be by him hardned, as in the case of *Saul* and *Ahab,* and those mentioned in the second Epistle to the *Thessalonians.*

3. (Saith he) he hardneth them *per se ipsos,* by themselves, giving them up, as my Text saith, to *vile affections.* Thus *Pharaoh* is said thrice to have *hardned his own heart*; *Pharaoh* by his own free-will hardned his heart, and God hardned it by his just judgment. God permitted the Heathens to sin yet more and more, and by an actual motion moved them to an act of sin (so far forth as it was an act).

4. Lastly, (saith he) God positively *hardneth sinners, By giving occasions, which through the lust that is in them, incline them*

to

to evil. God proposeth to them what things in their own nature should induce, and perswade them to that which is good, but they through their lust and malice make them an occasion to evil. Thus, saith he, God provoked the *Jews* to *emulation by a foolish nation*; *by shewing grace and mercy to the Gentiles*, the rage of the *Jews* against Christ grew greater. Thus Christs Preaching and Miracles, were occasion to the *Pharisees* of further blaspheming. But (saith that excellent Author) if we rightly understand it, it is not of so much moment, whether we say that God hardneth men *positively*, or *negatively*; for though as to the execution in the *event*, the act be *negative*, yet this event floweth from the positive purpose of God. It is therefore all one, whether we speak in the words of *Moses*, *Deut.* 29. 4. and say, *God hath not given them an heart to perceive, or eyes to see, and ears to hear*; or in the phrase of the Apostle, *Rom.* 11. 8. *God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes they should not see, and ears they should not hear until this day*; for the will of God is as effectual in his negative as positive actions. And now I think I have told you the utmost our Divines have said in this cause, unless some of them have said, that God is the Author *of his own judgments and punishments*, which I think none can with modesty deny, it being no more than the Scripture saith of all those things which are of a *positive nature*, but not of those things which are of a *privative nature*, which yet he may will should be done by his permission, though not by his efficiency; and this is no more than *Arminius* himself confesseth, that God is *effector actus*, though no more than *permissor peccati*. The sum is, if we understand by the *punishment of sin with sin*, Gods judicial act, by which he withdraweth his grace, or his leaving of sinners to the satisfaction of their own lusts; there is no question, but God for mens former sins may do this, yea more than this: he may judicially deliver men up to their lusts, and to Satan to be seduced at his pleasure, and offer them occasions (in their own nature leading to good) which they through their corruption may turn to further sinning. But God cannot punish the former sins of any, by putting any lust or malice into their hearts, by which they become more evil, or otherwise than accidentally, stirring up that lust and malice which is in their heart. This is the sum, so far as I know, of what Divines say, as to Gods acts in the *punishment of sin*, by delivering them up to farther sinnings,

Twiss. Vind. gratiæ, 3. 163.

though I think *Paræus* saith true, that besides these ways in which God acteth *positively*, and more than *barely negatively* and *permissively*, *God hath many other ways which we cannot explicate, by which he punisheth sin with sin*; *for who knoweth, or is able to unfold all the ways of God?*

Thus far we have seen (so far as we are able to comprehend) what God *doth* in this his judicial act of punishing sin with sin.

Let us now consider under what circumstances those are whom God bringeth under so severe a dispensation. I answer, *They are not only sinners* (for God doth not deal thus with every sinner), *but such as have provoked him to a very great heighth and degree, shutting their eyes against that light which hath shone upon them, and contemning the precepts of God, and the means he hath used to reclaim them*: Such was *Pharaoh*, first he hardned his own heart, which I think is said three times over; then God saith he would *harden his heart*: such were the Heathen, mentioned in this Chapter, they had prodigiously sinned against the light and law of Nature: Such were the *Jews*, to whom this judgment is denounced, *Isa.* 6. compared with *Matth.* 13.

Now this being rightly understood, I appeal to the reason of any one that heareth me, although this be a most tremendous dispensation of God; yet whether it be not such as is very consistent, both with the Justice, and Purity, and Holiness of God. Is it not just with God to punish sinners, especially prodigious sinners, and such of them as have shut their eyes, lest the light should shine upon them? If it be just with God to throw such into Hell, why should it not be just with him to seal them up to that damnation? might he cut them off by death, and immediately turn them into Hell? why may he not leave them destitute of his grace, and give them up to a reprobate mind, and to vile affections, and an hard heart, which are but the *præludia* to this damnation? Doth any doubt whether this be consistent *with the purity and holiness of God*? I ask, why may not God deny his *means of grace* to whom he pleaseth, and yet be an holy God? and may he not then deny it to, or withdraw it from those that have abused his patience, and turned his grace into wantonness and lasciviousness? doth he deliver them up to Satan to be tempted, seduced, hardned? Is not Satan Gods instrument in punishing sinners? may not the just and holy God use what instruments he pleaseth for the execution of his wrath?

Object.

Object. 1. *But doth not God by this become the Author of sin?*
I answer, If sin be considered in its true nature, as it is a defect, a filthy action contrary to the Law of God, surely none can be the Author of it, but either he *who doth it*, or who *perswades*, or *commandeth*, or *inciteth to the doing of it*. God neither infuseth that lust which is exercised, nor commandeth, nor perswadeth the exerting of it. If we consider *sin* as the *punishment of sin*, so the permission of it is but a *just dispensation of God*, and a *judicial act*; and why God should not be the *Author of punishments*, I cannot understand.

Object. 2. *But doth not God in this dispensation will the sins of these poor wretches?*
I answer, He doth not *will the doing of them*, but he *willeth that they should be done*; and in this sense he willeth all the sin that is committed in the world; for as nothing could be done contrary to his will, so he doth not govern the world as an idle spectator, only looking on to see what his creatures will do. But he is far from *willing the actions*, either soliciting, or commanding, or perswading, or assisting them.

Object. 3. *But God giveth occasions to them?*
I answer, It is true, but it is through the *lusts of mens hearts that they become such occasions*. They are in themselves either of such a nature, as they might improve for their good, and ought to have done so: such were the Miracles which God shewed *Pharaoh*, or which *Christ* did before the *Pharisees*, and the *Sermons* which *he* and his *Apostles* preached to them, or at least such as had in themselves no tendency to produce such an effect. The Governess of the house doth not think that she is either principal or accessary to a servants theft, because she suffereth pieces of Plate to go freely up and down for the use of her family, which possibly becometh a temptation to the lust of her servant, to make him or her to steal.

Object. 4. But God knew that *these sinners would take these occasions to grow worse.*
I answer, That must be granted: but what then? suppose one of us did know that our good counsels, or reproofs, or corrections

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of our Children would but make them worſe, muſt not we therefore uſe theſe which in themſelves are means to make them better? Suppoſe a Miſtreſs in a Family did know that her ſervant would ſteal ſome of thoſe things which ſhe ſuffers to go up and down and be commonly uſed in her houſe, is ſhe therefore bound to lock them up, and let her whole Family want neceſſary utenſils? Will ſhe not rather ſay, I will have thoſe things in my houſe which are fit; if any of my Servants will ſteal them, let it be at their peril, they ſhall be hang'd for it. Yet ſurely the *Law of Charity*, which God hath laid *us all under toward our Brethren*, obliging us to beware laying of ſtumbling-blocks, and giving unneceſſary occaſions of ſin unto them, doth not tie up God. But there is no end of diſputing with ſuch as are reſolved to hold their concluſion, and ſeek nothing but occaſions of reviling. I have enlarged my ſelf far enough upon this argument to ſhew, I think, every unprejudiced hearer, that it is neither contrary to the juſtice, nor purity and holineſs of God, to *puniſh ſin with ſin*; giving up ſtubborn ſinners to vile Affections, and a reprobate mind.

Uſe. Let me now ſhut up this Diſcourſe with a few words of Application.

Exho. And what application can be proper to this diſcourſe but *an Exhortation to all to take heed of preſumptuous ſinnings againſt Light.* That ſort of people amongſt us whom we call *Quakers*, call to all men to *take heed to the Light within them.* I will not profeſs perfectly to underſtand their principles. But they ſeem in ſome of their diſcourſes, to me to think, that *men have Light enough within them to ſhew them the way to Heaven*; and if ſo, that will prove a great miſtake: but thus much is certain, That every man hath *a light within him. That which may be known of God is manifeſt in them*, Rom. 1. 19. Every man that is born into the world, hath a natural light, diſcovering ſomething of God, and of his duty to him, and is under a *natural Law*, which obligeth him to ſome duty in proportion to his light. The Apoſtle in this, *Rom.* 1. ſaith of the Heathens that *they knew God*, and hinteth, that they ought to have glorified him as God, that is, to have paid an homage to God proportionable to the knowledg which they had of his glorious being. But *we* who are within the pale of the Church: *have* (as the Apoſtle ſaith) *a more ſure word of Prophecy. Whereunto we ſhall do well to take heed, as unto a light ſhining in a*

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dark place, 2 Pet. 1. 19. Besides this, many have a common illumination of the Spirit, so far ordinarily attending the Ministry of the word: of such the Apostle speaks, *Heb.* 6. 4. And the Law of conscience, ordinarily worketh according to this Light. It is indeed true there are and will be differences, as to all these Lights. The light of nature varies according to mens parts and education. The *Light* of *Revelation* according to the Ministry of the word men sit under, and the other according to Gods pleasure who by his Spirit irradiateth some more than others; but according to our light so doth conscience lay a Law upon us. Now men and women are highly concerned, to behave themselves both toward God, and towards men *according to the light they have*, that is, according to the discoveries they have either from natural principles, or from the word of God, or the illuminations of the Spirit of God, what God is, and what God requireth of them either as acts of homage immediately towards him, or as acts of *Justice* and brotherly love towards their neighbour; especially to take heed of bold and impudent actings to the contrary: for this cause it is that God judicially gives many up to blindness of mind, hardness of heart, vile affections, a reprobate mind, *having the understanding darkned, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*, Eph. 4. 18, 19. You see both from this Chapter in which my Text is, and from that Text, *Eph.* 4. That it is what may *befal poor Heathens*, which have no more then a *natural light*, yet even they for not living up to that, may so far provoke God: what do you think Christians may do then, that besides the natural light, have the light of the Law and Gospel, the *sure word* of Prophecy? that have consciences further enlightened, and under a further Law than the Heathens could possibly have? such *as have*, as the Apostle speaketh, *Heb.* 6. 4. *Tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the holy ghost, as have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come?* If the Heathens came under such a judgment, because when they knew or might have known by the very light of nature, that the Lord that *made Heaven and Earth*; could not possibly be like a man, nor a beast, nor creeping things, yet would not attend to the workings of their own reason, nor give their consciences leave to speak, nor hearken to them, but in their

practice

practice *changed the image of the incorruptible God into an image made like to a corruptible man*, &c. were for this deserted of God, and given up to that dreadful degree of judgment this Chapter mentioneth; what shall become of those amongst Christians, think you, who besides the advantage which they have common with Heathens, from that of God which is manifest in them, and *from the things that are made*, to know what manner of being God is, have also *the holy Scriptures* telling them, *That God is a Spirit and will be worshipped in Spirit and truth*; That images are teachers of lies, and *mediums* by which God will not be worshippped, and revealing his wrath so plentifully against those that in so idle and wretched a manner did worship the true and living God, yet will worship him by images? Doth not the light of nature, and the light of Scripture shine in mens faces, and clearly discover to them, that God is not to be pleased with rude and confused noises, with meer formalities, and lip-labours, but with a simple, pure, and Spiritual worship, where the understanding, the heart and the affections go along with the tongue, and outward man; and where these are wanting all the cringings, and bowings, and roarings in the world, are abominable to him, and no better than the howling of a Dog, and grunting of a Swine. O Sirs, take heed of sinning against this light, for fear of being given up of God to superstitious vanities: for so it oft-times falleth out, that as a lyar, though at first he knew he told a lie, yet by repeating and telling it often, he hath forgot it was a lye, and possibly himself thinks he is relating a true story. So I am perswaded it falls out with many whose consciences at first grumbled a little at what they did, and told them this was no service of God; but through a just Judgment of God they shutting their Eyes against the light, at last think there is no other true worship of God besides what they have taken up, as to which it will at last appear, that it was none at all; for *who required any such things at their hands?* We can hardly think otherwise of the *Jews*, who at the first setting up of idolatry by *Jeroboam*, and that worser idolatry by *Ahab*, could not but think (many of them) that that was not the true worship of God; but by practice in it afterward grew so warm for it, that none else must be true, but they must slay the Lords Prophets, and persecute all those who either taught or practised any other way of worship more according to the mind and will of God.

2. And

2. And do not only take heed of *shutting your ears*, as to your duty towards God, lest God judicially give you up to *vile affections* as to superstitious vanities; but take heed also that you do not shut your eyes against convictions of your duty towards *your selves and others, in matters of morality.* Have you not startled sometimes to see to what brutish degrees of sensuality and immoralities many have fallen from high degrees of profession? To me it hath been one of the prodigies of our age. If one should have told some that were professors twenty or thirty years ago, that within such a time they should be *transgressors through* wine, so famous for impudent uncleanness, such Apostates from all Religion, such bruits almost in every part of their conversations, such persecutors of those that fear God, and with whom they sometimes professed to be of the same mind, they would certainly have said with *Hazael, are we dogs* that we should ever do any such things? Yet we have lived to see it. I am loth, I tremble to speak what I think; certainly God hath forsaken these poor creatures; they professed the truth, to have imbraced it in the love of it, but they were hypocrites, they received it not in the love of it, but meerly in a faction, and for some base sinister ends, and for this cause. God hath given them up to strong delusions, God hath thrown them off his hand of restraint, withdrawn his common grace from them, given them up to the *Devil* even in this life; God is now punishing upon them their former falshood. Give me leave to speak my fears, I profess they are my thoughts, my sad thoughts, that we live in an age as full of persons that have sinned the sin that shall never be forgiven, as any age ever was since our Lord was upon the Earth. *The sin unto death*, for which St. *John* saith *we should not pray*, must certainly be prodigious sinning against light, let but *malicious* be added to it in any Soul; and I then shall believe he hath not sinned the sin against the holy ghost, when I shall see God renewing such a one by repentance, and not before. To such persons I have little or nothing to say. But *O let them that stand, take heed lest they fall. Fœlix quem faciunt*, &c. That is an happy Soul that can learn to take heed by the dreadful falls of others; it hath been the saying of others, that *Religion stands on tip-toes in our Land.* I can say nothing to that, I hope better things; but give me leave to say to those particular Souls in this City, that hear me this day, Your Souls stand on tip-toes. I have now been a witness of the Gospels

God, yet will worship him by images? Doth not the light of nature, and the light of Scripture shine in mens faces, and clearly discover to them, that God is not to be pleased with rude and confused noises, with sweet Perfumes and lip-labours, but with a simple, pure, and Spiritual worship, where the understanding, the heart and the affections go along with the tongue, and outward man; and where these are wanting all the cringings, and bowings, and rearings in the world, are abominable to him, and no better than the howling of a Dog, and grunting of a Swine. O Sir, take heed of sinning against this light, for fear of being given up of God to superstitious vanities: for so it oft-times falleth out, that as a Liar, though at first he knew he told a lie, yet by repeating and telling it often, he hath forgot it was a lye, and possibly himself thinks he is relating a true story. So I am perswaded it falls out with many whose consciences at first grumbled a little at what they did, and told them this was no service of God; but through a just judgment of God they shutting their Eyes against the light, at last think there is no other true worship of God besides what they have taken up, as to which it will at last appear, that it was none at all; for *who required any such things at their hands?* We can hardly think otherwise of the *Jews*, who at the first setting up of idolatry by *Jeroboam*, and that worser idolatry by *Ahab*, could not but think (many of them) that that was not the true worship of God; but by practice in it afterward grew so warm for it, that none else must be true, but they must slay the Lords Prophets, and persecute all those who either taught or practised any other way of worship more according to the mind and will of God.

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being

being preached to you thirty years, *if it be hid I fear it is hid to them that perish.* It is much to be feared that you who being of years of understanding have been hearers of the means of grace you have had for these years (yet the faithful preaching of the Gospel, did not commence with my first knowledg of this City) are sealed one way or other, either to Salvation or to damnation. when I speak of being sealed to Salvation I do not understand blessed with a full assurance of it; but the Spirit of God hath made ere this time such impressions upon their hearts, as will make Salvation sure to them though it may be they have not within themselves (sensibly) the witness and assurance of it. I say for those of you who are not thus far sealed, it is much to be feared that you have another Seal upon you, even a Seal of eternal condemnation. It may be you are not in despair, possibly if you had less hope it might be better for you, hope slayeth the hypocrite; but hath not God given you over? Do not you find your hearts are grown more hard, and insensible, more filthy, and vain, and frothy? there is a Seal and a dreadful one too. For old professors to lose their profession, to have cast off their awe, and dread of God, their practice of Religion in their Families and conversation, to grow loose and vain, to turn scoffers, and enemies to Religion and Godliness. You that yet stand, O look to your standing, I would have you look upon men, that have had formerly much light, made great profession and are fallen off to open courses of Sin, as sad examples of Divine vengeance, as if they were turned into Hell. They are no better than brands of Hell-fire, yet stinking, and smoaking in the Land of the living, that others may hear and fear; and take heed of sinning against the degrees of light which they have sinned against. O be afraid; you that have yet light before you, how you behave your selves towards it; instead of disputing the justice, holiness, and goodness of God in punishing sin with sin, be afraid lest this should be your portion, shut not your eyes against the glorious light of the Gospel, take heed of quenching the Spirit, smothering the reflections of your conscience, resisting your convictions, struggling with and against the Spirit of God, quarrelling with God for any lusts contrary to the Revelation of his will; lest, as God said of *Ephraim, Ephraim is joined to Idols, let him alone,* so God should say concerning any of you, such a one knows better, but he is joined to his formalities, to his vain superstitions, *Let him alone*; or such a one must have

4: Hosea: 17.

his Cupe, his Lusts, his unjust gain, *Let him alone*: be assured, if God once resolveth to *Let thee alone*, thou wilt find thy Soul rouling to Hell fast enough. *Satan* besides will not let that Soul alone of whom God hath pronounced, *Let him alone*. But this is enough to have spoken to this Subject.

SERMON XLII.

2 Thes. I. 9.

Who shall be punished with Everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his Power.

I Am yet indeavouring to make those ways of Divine Providence plain, which to our apprehensions appear difficult and hard to be understood by our weak capacities. In my last discourse I trod upon the brink of the infernal Pit, clearing up to you the justice of God in *punishing sin with sin*, giving men up for former sinnings to *blindness of mind, hardness of heart, a reprobate mind, vile affections*: that is, in effect a placing them in the very Suburbes of Hell. My discourse this day will be about the pit it self. *Atheists* doubt whether there be such a pit or no, it is their interest to deny it; others cannot tell how to reconcile an *everlasting punishment* to the Divine Justice, there being no proportion between the pleasures of sin for a season, and the torments of Hell for ever. My Text you see plainly mentions a *punishment with everlasting destruction*.

If you consider the words of my Text with their reference to what went before, you will find the Apostle, v. 3. Blessing God for the *Thessalonians* increase, in their *Faith*, *Charity*; and v. 4. Their patience in all the tribulations which they had indeed.

You must know that these Christian inhabitants of *Thessalonica*, lived in the first and most furious times for Gospel-persecutions, when the Heathen amongst whom they lived, had gotten a law, and by *that law* (as the *Jews* said of Christ) those that owned the name of Christ *ought to die*, or to be plundered of their Estates, and imprisoned; and amongst so many Heathens it was not possible, they should want *Informers*. Nor did they want some Judges that would to the utmost execute those severe Laws upon them. Now in the enduring of all those hard things for Christ and his Gospels sake, these Christians had shewed admirable patience; and for this the Apostle thinks himself bound to bless God, *For it is given to us on the behalf of Christ to suffer*, as well as to believe, *Phil.* 21.9.

Having mentioned these persecutions he inlargeth a little further, *v.* 5,6,7. Comforting them under them,

1. *From the Consideration of the testimony in them, of the righteous judgment of God.* Which he proveth, *v.*6. *It is*, saith he, *a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to them that trouble you.* 2. *To give you who are troubled rest and peace.* Lest these Christians should say, but *when shall these things be?* He tells them, *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, taking Vengeance on them who know not God and obey not the Gospel of Christ; who* (saith he in my Text) *shall be punished with everlasting destruction.* The Text will afford us two *Propositions.*

1. Prop. *That those persons who in this life have not known God, or have not obeyed the Gospel of Christ, when Christ shall come to judgment shall be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

2. Prop. *That amongst sinners, the persecutors of others unjustly for their conscience toward God, and for the Gospel of Christ shall least escape this righteous Judgment. These above others shall be punished with everlasting destruction.*

The Emphasis of the proposition, so far as I desire to handle it, lies in the word everlasting; *they shall* (saith the Text) be punished with *everlasting destruction*, which is no more than our Saviour had said, *Matth.* 25.46. *And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*, and *Matth.* 9. 44, 46, 48.

Where

Where you read *of a worm that never dieth*, and *a fire that is not quenched*. The Revelation of Scripture in the case is plain enough: only here is the Question.

Quest. *How it can stand with the Justice, or goodness of God, to punish momentary Sins, with everlasting destruction?*

The grounds of this Question or doubt are.

1. *The proportion which Justice* seemeth to require betwixt the *offence*, and the *punishment*. Justice amongst men requireth a *proportion*, as well as punishment it self; and it is with us accounted injustice not to keep a measure in punishment. Every one condemneth the *Roman* taking away the life of his Servant, in compensation of a cup-board of glasses he had broken, and we count it hardly just, to do the like for little things stollen from us: now there seemeth to be no proportion betwixt momentany sinnings and eternal punishments. *Tertullian* rightly calls sins *vaporata libidinum momenta*, And the holy ghost calls them *the pleasures of sin for a season*. It is the same case as to the profits of sin, man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live; and no longer time to sin in, then he hath to live.

2. *Eternal torments* seem to bear no proportion to that *infinite goodness and mercy of God*, which we have read of to be in God. They say indeed of *Nero*, that having condemned a malefactor to long torments, and pleasing himself to see him so tormented, when the poor wretch called to him for mercy, he gave him no other answer, then *Nondum tecum in gratiam redii*; stay Sir, you and I are not friends yet, but is it possible without blasphemy to imagin any such thing of God, of whose nature it is to *forgive*, and to *shew mercy?* Can he please himself with the eternal torments of a creature which he hath made? No, no, (saith the *Atheist*) Hell is but a bugbear, there can be no such thing consistent with the Justice and goodness of God as Eternal Destruction.

But the Scripture affirms it, suffer me therefore in general to cry out, O you Sons of men, *are not the Lords ways equal? Are not your ways inequal? who art thou, O man, who reasonest with God? Shall the clay say to the Potter why hast thou made me thus?* Is not our Reason debauched think we when it can agree no better with the Reason and wisdom of God, whence it deriveth, and that in

a less proportion, than a drop of water beareth to the Ocean, or the Fountain from which it deriveth?

Know therefore that all these vain and Atheistical reasonings of our hearts proceed upon one, or more of these mistaken principles.

1. *That Gods compassion, goodness or mercy, must be Eternally extended to, and exercised upon, the most notorious desperate despisers and contemners of it.* Now this is indeed to fancy an idol to our selves instead of God: we have no reason so to conceive of God, partly because we find no humane nature so tame, though we be under a Law of shewing pity and compassion; partly, because the Scripture no-where teacheth us such a notion of God. Besides, that such a notion of God as this is would disarm the most excellent and perfect being of all power to protect it self, from the greatest injuries which the most debauched persons should offer to it. I would gladly know what reason, or what part of Scripture, can induce any to dream of a goodness, and mercy of God towards sinners beyond this life?

2. *That the goodness and mercy of God must be estimated, and measured by his dispensations to individuals.* Amongst men, mercy to some *particular persons* that are eminent disturbers of humane Society, is cruelty to thousands possibly. Gods mercy may be exercised, and he may be a God in whom all that the Scripture saith of that goodness, that is in the Divine being, may be verified, and yet hundreds yea thousands of impenitent sinners may eternally perish.

3. *That the proportion which the Divine Justice observeth in punishing sinners, must be measured by the proportion of time which the sinner hath to sin in.* Than which there nothing more false, nor (as I shall anon shew you) is there any such rule kept to in the justice of men.

4. *That the Justice of God is to be measured by the same measures as the Justice of men,* and nothing which amongst men is injust can be just with God; where-as among men, we see the same rewards and punishments are not judged just as to all men: all Nations (though the fact be the same) otherwise punish injuries done to superiours than to inferiours, and it is thought but just to proportion the punishment to the quality and greatness of the person to whom the injury is done.

5. *That*

3. *That the condemned sinner satisfies by his suffering*, than which there is nothing more false. No creditor takes his debtors lying in prison, whatever misery he feeleth there, to be any part of payment of his debt. These are some of the mistaken Principles, from which vain man quarrelleth at the Divine Justice, in the eternal destruction of sinners. Now these things premised, I shall easily shew you, that eternal punishment is not inconsistent with the Justice of God, nor doth any way derogate from that infinite goodness and mercy which is inseparable from the Divine Being.

1. *Why should we not* (in the first place) *allow that to be just with God, which we allow to be just and righteous in man?* What doth man less than this according to the extent of his power? Doth not the Magistrate for his offence deprive the Traytor, the Murtherer, or other Malefactor, of his life, and all the comforts of it for ever? Divines say, that in Hell there is a *pain of loss*, and a *pain of sense*; and the Schoolmen argue the former to be greater than the latter: you see man inflicteth an eternal *pain of loss*, and counts it just; he taketh away the *malefactors life*, and all the *sweet concomitants* of it from him for ever; he imprisoneth him during life, banisheth him from his Country, never to return, confiscates his estate for ever: Yet who quarrels with him as if he did unjustly?

Object. But will some say, God doth not only adjudge a sinner to an eternal loss of his life, estate, liberty, this indeed man doth; *but God adjudgeth him also to eternal torments, to a never-dying worm, a fire that never shall be quenched.*

Sol. I answer, Had man the same power, he would also do the same thing, and yet hope to be acounted guiltless: where eminent injuries are done to persons of great place and power, How many are angry, and will not be reconciled, though they be under a Divine Law obliging them to the contrary? How doth man sometimes divide a Malefactors last punishment, and suffers him not to dye at once, but by piece-meal, to make his punishment as long-lived as he can? What will you say of those condemned to be starved to death? Yet in some great crimes, who calleth this cruelty or injustice? The greatness of the offence is in this case judged to justifie the extraordinariness of the punishment.

2. *What*

2. *What injustice can it be in God, to be ever exacting satisfaction to a debt which is never paid,* especially when the debtor hath also refused his pardon for it? Suppose one of us hath a debtor who oweth us a great sum of Money, we offer him, that if he will come to us, and upon his knees but ask pardon, we will forgive him the debt; he refuseth, we lay him up in Prison, still he payeth us nothing; Which of us counteth it unjust to keep this wretch in Prison as long as we can? The reason why we do not for ever keep him in Prison, is because that neither we, nor he, are of eternal duration. If indeed the suffering of the sinner a Thousand, Ten thousand years, did give any satisfaction to God; this were unjust: But who counteth a debtors lying in a Gaol, any payment of, or satisfaction for his debt? There are two things may be said of every sin, which should make the thoughts of sin very dreadful to every understanding Christian. 1. *That all the holy actions of all the men in the world, cannot make God amends for one sin.* It is a true saying of *Drexellius, Omnium bonorum sancta actiones unius lethalis noxæ pondere superantur.* 2. *That the severest punishment which any poor wretch can suffer for sin, cannot give God satisfaction for the least sin.*

3. What pretence can there be of charging *God with injustice, for continuing a punishment upon that sinner, that continueth his impenitency.* If a sinner in everlasting torments indeed either ever could, or did repent, there might possibly be some pretence for this imputation of injustice to God, or at least, something might be colourably said to derogate from the goodness and mercy of God, in not delivering him from those torments: Though that Text, *Rev.* 16. 9, 11, possibly be not to be understood of Hell, yet you have in it, a true picture of such as are under the condemnation of it. When the *fourth* and *fifth* Angels *poured out their vials, and had power to scorch men with fire,* it is said, *vers.* 9, That *they were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which had power over those plagues, and repented not to give him glory.* And again, *vers.* 11, *They blasphemed the God of Heaven, because of their pains, and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.* I say these two verses give you as to this thing, a true picture of Hell. Sinners are there plagued, and scorched with heat, but they repent not, to give glory to God. Had they in this life repented, they had never come into

to

to thoſe flames. In that ſtate indeed, there is no place, no means for repentance, nor hath any ſufferer there any heart for it. *Non decebat juſtitiam dei poenitere non poenitentium injuſtitiæ humanæ*; It did not become the juſtice of God to repent, as to their puniſhment, who never repent of their own injuſtice, and unrighteouſneſs. What man pitieth a perſon laid in Gaol for contriving Treaſon againſt his Prince, or Country? Becauſe he continueth there, whiles even in Priſon he goes on to revile, and threaten, and act what miſchief is in his power under his circumſtances? And will not ſo much as ſay that he hath done amiſs, nor beg his Princes pardon? This is the caſe of the damned ſoul: in this life he ſinned, but refuſed to repent, though he was often called to, and admoniſhed to repent; God throws him for his ſin, continued in impenitently, into Hell; there he repenteth not, he ſaith not ſo much as, I have ſinned, Lord have mercy upon me: Is God think you unjuſt in keeping this hardened, ſtubborn, and impenitent ſinner in an eternal Priſon? In this the ſinner is like to the Devil, and to his evil Angels; as the Saints in the reſurection are made like to the good Angels: ſo ſinners are like to the evil Angels. The Devils never repent, they never ſay, what have we done, they never ask God pardon; no more do ſinners that are once condemned to a fellowſhip and ſociety with them for ever.

4. *What injuſtice can there be in God, never to ceaſe from puniſhing that ſinner, who never ceaſeth from his acts of ſin?* I ſhall not here concern my ſelf in that queſtion, *whether the blaſphemies of the damned be ſins, yea, or no:* For my own part, I ſee no reaſon why they ſhould not be called *ſins*, they are the acts of *rational creatures contrary to the Law of God.* If the ſinner had in this life ceaſed to do evil, he had never come in thoſe torments; if he ceaſed not to ſin in this life, I ask when he ceaſed, or by what other name we can call the blaſphemies of damned ſouls becauſe of their torments, than that of ſins againſt God? If they be ſins, I ſay, damned ſouls never ceaſe to ſin. Are not the blaſphemies of the Devils ſins? And are not the blaſphemies of damned ſouls of the ſame nature? But I will not enlarge upon this, for it hath a great cognation to the former.

5. *If it were not unjuſt with God to annex the penalty of eternal deſtruction to his threatning againſt ſin, it cannot be unjuſt with*

him

him, having enacted a Law under such a penalty to execute it. The truth of this dependeth upon this principle, That it can be no injustice, to put a just Law in execution, which is so plain, as that it demonstrateth it self to every mans reason. For what is *Justice* in the *execution* or practice of it, but *the putting of just laws in execution?* Besides, what is necessary cannot be unjust. *Hath the Lord spoken it, and shall he not do it* (saith the Prophet)? God having enacted such a Law, and affixed such a threatning to it, is concerned in truth, to give being to the execution of it. So that all I have to do, is to evince the wisdom and justice of God in making such a Law, which will appear to you, if you please to consider,

1. *The influence which it hath upon those who shall be saved,* as a means to bring them to Heaven; this appeareth, from that of the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 5. 11, *We knowing the terrors of the Lord, perswade men:* as also from the frequent use which both our Saviour and his Apostles make of this argument, to deter men from sin, and to engage them to that duty which they owe unto God; in the performance of which they shall obtain everlasting life and salvation. *John Baptist* useth it, *Matt.* 3. 7. Our Saviour useth it, *Matt.* 25. The Apostle useth it, 1 *Thes.* 1. 10, and in many other places of Scripture.

2. Such a Law hath undoubtedly a great influence *upon the worst of men,* and keepeth them in awe, so as they dare not be so vile, as they otherwise would be. I have told you of that Heathen who is reported to have said, *That if God had not established death by his Law, it was yet so necessary for mankind, that it had been reason that Governours should have established some Law, to have determined mens lives at such or such times.* The Heathens knew nothing of the Revelation of Gods Will, as to the eternal destruction of any; but saw such a sanction so necessary for the rule and government of the World, that they figured such a thing, a place where thirsty *Tantalus* should have rivers just washing up to his lips, and yet he should not be able to drink of them; where weary *Sisyphus* should be always labouring to roll a stone up the hill, for which he should never be able to find a resting-place. The Heathens saw the necessity of frighting the world with a Sanction, for eternal punishments, for the punishment of wickedness. It is a saying of *Cicero, Itaque ne aliqua in vita formido improbis esset posita, apud inferos ejusmodi*

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di quædam ſupplicia impiis antique conſtituta eſſe voluerunt, quod videbant his remotis, non eſſe mortem ipſam pertimeſcendam. Orat. 4. *in Catilinam:* That is, "That wicked men might in this life "have upon them ſome fear of puniſhment, the Ancients would "have ſome puniſhments appointed in Hell; for they ſaw, that "without this, even death it ſelf would not be feared. Hence it was that *Origen* (one of the Ancients) though (as he had many other errors) he thought the puniſhment of the damned ſhould one day have an end; yet (as they ſay) he would never openly publiſh his opinion, being aware what a deluge of wickedneſs it would let in upon the world. I would offer it to any reaſonable mans thoughts, to conſider, what leſs than a threatening of eternal deſtruction could be in prudence judged, to bear any proportion to the impetuous luſt of rage and paſſion, that diſturbeth humane nature. Governors affix to their Laws, the penalties of perpetual impriſonment, baniſhment, whippings, brandings, burning, hanging, hanging drawing and quartering: we ſee this is not ſufficient, hundreds of perſons throughout *England* in a year, are cut off, notwithſtanding theſe Laws, and theſe puniſhments: It is true, ſome hope of eſcaping, and not being detected, may a little encourage; but this is not the main, they know if the worſt comes that can come, it is but exerciſing patience for an hour or two, and they are out of their miſery. I appeal to every conſiderate perſons judgment, whether he doth not think, that if the aw of an eternal deſtruction were of the world, the world would not be a Thouſand times more full of Traytors, Muntherers, Blaſphemers, Adulterers, Thieves, Defiers of all Divine and humane Laws than it is at this day, though it be now full enough; if they do not think ſo, their thoughts are very ſhallow, and they will be at a loſs, to tell us how the Chriſtianized parts of the world are more civil, and have fewer of theſe exorbitancies, than are to be found amongſt *Indians* and *Barbarians*: if they do think the world would be much worſe, I would fain know of them, whether the eſtabliſhing a law for the eternal deſtruction of ſinners, were not both juſt, and a piece of infinite Wiſdom in God. Now, if it were juſt for God to eſtabliſh ſuch a Law, I am ſure it muſt be a piece of diſtributive Juſtice in God to put it in execution; yea, and his truth muſt be alſo concerned in it: he hath ſpoken it, and he muſt do it; for he cannot alter the thing that hath gone out of his lips.

It is I think reasonably said by an ingenious Author, *That it more concerneth the glory of God, to keep many from sin, than to keep a few from Hell.* The Glory of God is far more highly his concern, than the salvation of particular persons. Gods Glory is more advanced by the restraint of sin in the universality of mankind, than it is hindred by the damnation of any part of them: And methinks we might without any great difficulty agree this, when-as it appeareth, both by our Laws, and the daily proceedings of our Courts of Judicatory; we agree it to be more for the publick good of a Nation, that the Government and Laws of a Nation should be maintained, than that the lives of hundreds of *Traytors*, *Murtherers*, *Thieves*, and other miscreants, that are disturbers of humane polities, and societies should be preserved.

3. But this is further advantaged from the consideration, *That this righteous Sanction of eternal destruction, is executed under the Gospel upon none to whom it hath not been a mean before to keep them from it.* I have told you, that as to those ordained to life, it is a means to preserve them from wrath to come, to hear of it, the Ministers of the Lord knowing the terrors of the Lord perswade men; and by the consideration and the hearing of these terrors, as by a partial mean, they are brought into a state opposite to it, a state of eternal joy and felicity. To the whole of mankind, it is a mean to restrain them from sin: I now add, that these poor wretches, who at last drop into the Pit as the demerit of their sins, continued in without repentance, have, or might have formerly heard of it denounced against them, as a means to keep them from it, and to bring them to an eternal felicity. Now doth man judge it a righteous thing, having made, and promulged Laws to his Subjects, telling them what shall be judged Treason, and what shall be the punishment of a Traytor, and therefore promulged his Laws, that they might take heed of *Treasons*, *Murthers*, or other *enormous crimes*; If afterwards they will commit them, that his Law should be rigorously executed upon them, to the confiscation of their goods, the depriving them of their liberties, yea, and lives too: I say, doth man thus judge? and shall we think it an unrighteous thing with God, when he doth not surprize sinners in their heaps of sin, but publisheth his Law in his word, promulgeth it by Ministers, and therefore publisheth it, that men and women might be by the terrors of the

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Lord perſuaded, and warned to flee from the wrath that is to come, and take heed of having their portion in that place, where the worm never dieth, and the fire never goeth out; yet notwithſtanding, in defiance of the authority of God, and in the contempt of his Law, they will go on, and take no warning to execute this Law upon them? To conclude this Meditation, to execute a juſt Law, can be no injuſtice, no cruelty, and in God it is neceſſary to vindicate both his authory, and truth. This Law of *eternal deſtruction*, as the puniſhment of ſin, conſidered in its firſt eſtabliſhment, was a juſt Law: Juſt, becauſe a means to bring many to Heaven, becauſe an univerſal mean and moſt prudential, and almoſt alone effectual to reſtrain ſin in the world; and becauſe it was firſt a *mean* to preſerve them from the pit, who at laſt through their own choice, ſtubbornneſs, and wilfulneſs, do fall into it. It is therefore impoſſible that it ſhould be any injuſtice in God to put this Law in execution, to puniſh impenitent and incorrigible ſinners with *eternal deſtruction.*

6. *The proportion which Juſtice is to obſerve, and adjuſt betwixt a puniſhment and an enormous ſinful act, is by no means to be meaſured, by comparing the time, or degree of pleaſure, which the ſinner hath had for his ſinning, or in his ſinful act, but by comparing the puniſhment, either with the dignity of the perſon injured and contemned, or with the damage done by the offence, or with the malice, treachery, and perfidiouſneſs of the perſon offending.* It muſt be acknowledged that diſtributive juſtice is to obſerve a proportion betwixt the puniſhment, and the nature of the offence: And upon this true principle it is, that this objection, theſe reaſonings of ours, againſt the juſtice of God in the *eternal deſtruction* of ſinners do proceed. But I ſay,

1. This *Proportion is not to be meaſured, either by the time the ſinner hath had to commit his ſins in, or by the degree of pleaſure, which the ſinner hath had in his inordinate ſinful actions.* That's all which the caviller in this point againſt Divine Juſtice hath here to ſay: What proportion is there between the ſins of a few years, and *eternal deſtruction?* being tormented in Hell Ten thouſand times ten thouſand years? But who amongſt men meaſureth thus the proportion of any puniſhment to any kind of offences amongſt men? The Murtherer hath killed his neighbour, the Traytor his Prince, his work was done in a ſmall part of an hour; it may

be very few days were taken up, either in the contrivance or execution of his design. Doth justice require, that the time of these Malefactors Imprisonment, or torture in Death, should not exceed the time of the contrivance, or execution of their sin? who ever so judged? There is nothing more ordinary in Philosophy, than to say, that distributive Justice ought to proceed according to *Geometrical proportion* between persons and things, not according to an *Arithmetical proportion*, observed in dealings between man and man. The measure then of a sinful action is not to be taken from the duration or continuance of a sinful Act. But,

1. *From the dignity of the person offended, injured, and contemned.* He that murthereth his Prince is punished otherwise, and more severely than he who murthereth his equal. By Gods Law, if the Daughter of the *High Priest committed uncleanness she was to be burned*, Levit. 21. 9. So was not every one who was an adultress; but she had *defiled her father*, and therefore was not to dye an ordinary death. It is only said, *he that curseth his father or mother shall dye*, Levit. 20. 9. In our Law, If a person murthereth his equal, or inferiour, he or she shall be hanged, they shall dye the ordinary death of malefactors; but if the Woman murthereth her Husband, the Child his Parent, the Servant his Master, they shall be burned; if the Traytor murthereth his Soveraign, he shall be hanged, drawn and quartered: The injury is done to their superiors. Now there is not so great a disproportion betwixt the greatest Emperor, and the meanest Villain in the world, as there is betwixt the great God of Heaven and Earth, and his creature: Nor is there so great a disproportion betwixt hanging, burning, and torturing to death, and eternal punishment, as there is betwixt an infinite and a finite being. Sin taketh an infiniteness, from the infiniteness of that God against whom it is committed. And so is *objective infinitum*, objectively infinite; so as there is no disproportion, though the punishment be as they say *durative infinita*, infinite in duration. The durative infiniteness of the punishment, is adequated to the objective infiniteness of sin.

2. *Sin is to be measured by the damage it doth to the person injured, or to the publick.* Upon this principle of Reason proceedeth another reason of different punishments: He that meerly curseth or speaketh evil of his Prince, shall not be punished as

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he that murthereth him. Now sin wrongeth God infinite ways. *In his Soveraignty.* The sinner saith, God hath no Authority over me, no power, no right to command me; my thoughts are free, I will think what I list; my tongue is my own, I will speak, God hath nothing to do with me; it wrongeth God *in his holiness*, it says the Laws of God are not holy, it wrongeth him in his *Omniscience, Omnipotence, All sufficiency*, in his *Justice*, in his *Wisdom*, in all his Attributes: It were a great work to shew you how many ways sin wrongeth God; it is *intensive infinitum*, intensively infinite, and therefore a punishment of an infinite extension, is but proportioned unto it. I pass over the injury done by it to man, as not to be compared with this.

3. Sin is to be measured by the *falshood, treachery, malice and perfidiousness of the person offending*. Hence the traytor, the rebellious child, the bloody wife and servant are more severely punished than others that do the same things to other persons, because they violate a trust, and shew the greatest treachery and perfidiousness. Iniquity takes the greater heinousness from the greatest obligations to the contrary duty. Now in all sinning against God there are the greatest failers of faith and duty, the greatest abuses of love and goodness imaginable. So as if we thus take our measures, justice keeps but a due *geometrical proportion* in the eternal punishment of the momentary sins of sinners; for as is the *punishment* to the *offence*, so is the *party offended to the party offending*. As the punishment is without end, infinite, whereas the sins were momentary and temporary: so the party offended was infinite, and the sinner who dared to defie infinite Majesty, and disobey an infinitely great and glorious God was but a finite worm. As is the *injury in sinning* to a man, so is the vengeance in punishment to the sin. Man is a poor pitiful worm, but by sin he doth an infinite wrong to God; it cannot be expressed how he dishonoureth God: there is no measuring the depth of the guilt in sin. Sin is indeed a finite thing, but it is punished with an infinite punishment; proportioned well enough to the infinite wrong done to the Divine being by it. Let this be a sixth Demonstration of the justice of God.

7. The justice of God in the eternal punishment of finite temporary sins, is cleared in this, *That the sinner hath sinned, in suo aterno, in his eternity*. There is in every sinner *infinita voluntas peccandi*, a will to sin infinitely and without end. This I remember

ber a learned Author calleth *pessimam adhæsionem peccati*, one of the worst circumstances of sin. That the sinner doth not sin eternally, is from Gods quicker cutting asunder the thred of his life: had the thred of a sinners life run out to eternity, he would have sinned to eternity. Suppose one amongst the damned who had not spent above twenty or thirty years in the world in sinning, I would appeal to the judgement of any deliberate man, whether this man would not willingly have lived fifty, sixty, or an hundred years, and if he therefore did not desire to live so long, that he might take his fill of sin, satiate himself with his lusts; he who saith otherwise must charge God with damning a soul, who, he knew would have repented, if God would have suffered him to have lived long enough; and can any entertain such a thought of God? If the sinner had lived for ever he would have gone on in his sins for ever; then there was in him a kind of infiniteness in willing sin. This account of the justice of God in the eternal destruction of sinners, is given us by *Greg. Mag.* I will give you his words in English.

"They who cavil (saith he) at the justice of God in this speak "right, if the just Judge of the whole earth did not proceed "against men, as well for their thoughts as their actions: wick-"ed mens sins are therefore finite, because their lives are so. "They would have lived eternally, that they might have sinned "eternally; for they more desire to sin than to live, and there-fore they desire to live always, that they might never cease to sin. *Gr. Mag. mor. l.* 4. *c.* 18.

It is therefore righteous with God that their punishment should never end, whose sinful hearts knew no end in their willingness and lustings to sin. The sinner hath no end as to Divine Vengeance, because as long as he could he would know no term in sinning. It is not just with man to punish the intentions and motions of the heart, because he can but guess at them; he cannot certainly know them till they appear by some overt actions. Our Law makes it treason to imagine the death of the King; indeed the Traytor is not punished till his imagination be discovered by some overt words or actions, by which alone man can judge of intentions and imaginations: but to shew us how just even man sometimes judgeth it, especially in some great crimes, to punish intentions; very small overt actions will sometimes serve to judge of the counsels, designes and intentions of a malefactors heart.

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8. *The juſtice of God in puniſhing ſinners with everlaſting deſtruction, is apparent by his propoſal of an eternal reward to the greateſt ſinners, if they will repent and turn unto him.* God ſetteth before every ſinner an eternal life, as well as an eternal death; the ſinner maketh his choice, he chooſeth death rather than life; ſo as the proportion of Juſtice in the puniſhment, is juſtified by the proportion of the reward offered, in caſe the ſinner would leave his ſins and turn unto God. This account *Aquinas* gives of the juſtice of God in this particular. *The ſinner* (ſaith he) *refuſeth and putteth from him an infinite good, and deſpiſeth an unchangeable good for things that are mutable.* Gods puniſhments are no greater nor of longer duration, than his rewards are which are propoſed to the ſame perſons, if they would have turned from their ſins, that they might have lived.

9. Who can ſo much as in a ſecret thought charge God with injuſtice, in the eternal puniſhment of a ſinner, who remembreth *that God for the ſin of man laid a puniſhment upon an infinite perſon, who was the Son of his eternal love*: and this the Apoſtle ſaith, Rom. 3. 26. *Was to declare his righteouſneſs: To declare, I ſay, at this time his righteouſneſs, that he might be juſt, and the Juſtifier of him who believeth in Jeſus.* Now in this we are ſo far from quarrelling at the juſtice of God, that there is no Chriſtian that doth not adore and admire it: what is the difference? There God puniſhed an infinite perſon for a time; here he puniſheth finite perſons in an infinity of time, that what they cannot ſuffer in the intenſion of their ſuffering, they might be ever doing in the extenſion of time: yea and this difference more is obſervable, God in puniſhing his Son, laid our iniquities upon another; here the ſinner beareth none but his own burthen, and doth but ſuffer the puniſhment due to his own iniquity. Now if we will quarrel at Gods righteouſneſs in this loading of his own Son with the burthen of his wrath, we quarrel at the higheſt contrivement of Divine and Infinite Wiſdom for the ſalvation of men: yet it is much more reaſonable to diſpute that than the juſtice of God, in the eternal perſonal puniſhment of a ſinner. It is the ſaying of *Nierembergius.*

Illud mihi videtur ridiculum, mirari Divinam ſeveritatem in æterna ſceleſtorum punitione, nec intendere infinitam illam juſtitiam in innocentia unigeniti dilecti ſui: Quid mirum torqueri in æternum ſceleſtos pro peccatis ſuis ſi paſſus eſt pro alienis juſtiſſimus Dei filius?

lius? Qui potuit sustinere sine contumelia sua bonitatis charissimum natum una hora pati injuste, multo melius tolerabit aeternis injustos supplicijs affligi justissime. Nieremb.

"It to me (saith he) seemeth ridiculous to admire at Divine "severity in the eternal punishment of wicked men, and not to at- "tend to that infinite justice in the innocency of his only beloved "Son. What wonder is it that wicked men should be for ever tor- "mented for their own sins, if the most righteous son of God suf- "fered for the sins of others. He that without a reproach to his "goodness could endure his most dear Son to suffer so long as one "hour, will much better endure unjust sinners to be tormented "with eternal punishment.

10. Lastly, *It is the greatest error and madness imaginable for any soul to dream of mercy in God, after the contempt and despising of his goodness and mercy, to a final impenitency.* What is Divine goodness and mercy, but the will of God inclining him to do good to miserable creatures. This, we say, is to be found in God, and that to an infinite degree; and is abundantly seen in his long-suffering and forbearance of them, and patience to them; in his waiting upon them all the days of their life, giving them his Gospel, sending them his Ministers, beseeching them to be reconciled unto God, knocking by his Spirit at the doors of their hearts. Thus the merciful God extendeth his goodness unto all sinners, a long time he declareth that he desireth not the death of any sinner, but is willing that all should be saved, by coming to the acknowledgment of the truth. The vile sinner through the pride of his heart, will not seek after God, but vexeth, grieveth, resisteth his holy Spirit from time to time, refuseth to repent and to turn unto God, defieth him, mocketh at the tenders of Divine grace: thus he liveth, thus he dieth, yet hath heard of, and knoweth the threatnings of eternal destruction: he looketh upon them as bug-bear things, not to fright such men as he is, but children only: he drinks, he swears, he curseth and blasphemeth God; lyes, breaketh Sabbaths, he will venture it. Who is that God that shall restrain the lusts of his heart? He will try whether there be such an Hell, such an eternal destruction yea or no. What do we talk of mercy after this, to such a bold defier of the Divine Majesty? What kind of being must we fancy the eternal God, if we should imagine him to have one drop of mercy for such a contemner and defier of Divine goodness? Surely he that

made this man will have no mercy on him, he that formed him can shew him no favour, without a dethroning himself, and making himself the contempt of his creature. This every sinner doth, one more openly and boldly, another more secretly and tacitly. Every fool, if he doth not speak it with his tongue, yet *saith in his heart, there is no God.* While vain man talks of mercy in God in this case, I am afraid he fancieth mercy in God to be a passion as it is in us, which necessarily stirs to compassionate every object of misery. Alas! it is no such thing, it is nothing else but the good will of God to do good to sinners if they will be made partakers of his goodness: The same will moveth, and that justly too, otherwise after this life the red flag is then held out. The last grains of sand in the glass of mercy are dropt out, when this life is determined. There is no more sacrifice for sin remaining, but a dreadful looking for of Judgement and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. *He that despised Moses law, died without mercy*; of how much *sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, who have trodden under foot the blood of the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified, as an unholy thing, Heb.* 10 26,27. These men have done despight to the Spirit of Grace, and we know who hath said *vengeance is mine, and I will repay it, I will recompense* (saith the Lord) and again, *the Lord shall judge his people.* I conclude then with the Apostle in that place, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* There is a time for all things, and as it is so with men, so it is with God: There is a time for mercy, that is the time of this life; and there must be a time for the execution of Justice, when God shall declare his righteousness upon sinners who have despised his goodness and patience, that is the time after this life. The inch of Candle is out when the sinners life is expired: no more coming to the waters, and buying then what before was offered without money, and without price. Mercy hath done its utmost as to such sinners: no more mercy is to be found in God for them, no more compassion in that God who is full of mercy and tender compassion. Nor shall we need at all to stumble at this, for to oblige Magistrates to be always pitiful to them that are in misery, though they have been the causes of it to themselves, and have brought themselves into misery by the highest contempts of Authority and Government; yea and of the clemency and patience of the

Magistrate, were quickly to prostitute all Government, and to expose those that manage it to the basest contempt and scorn imaginable: and if the Princes and Judges of the earth, and Generals of Armies upon the prospect of this, see a necessity of setting limits to their bowels of compassion, and no one judgeth them either unjust or cruel in so doing; why may not the same be allowed to the holy and righteous God? But I have spoken enough to convince those who observe the principles of justice allowed in the practice of all States and Governments, with the general observation of the wiser sort in the world, That God is neither cruel nor unrighteous in punishing with an eternal destruction those that know not God, and obey not his Gospel, although their time and pleasure of sinning hath born no proportion, either to the time or degree of their torments. I shall apply it but in a word or two.

1. The first, *To sinners who are yet impenitent, who have not yet by repentance and faith saved themselves from this wrath to come.*

2. The second to those who *through grace* have saved themselves from this wrath.

Use 1. To the first I shall only speak after the great Apostle of the Gentiles. *We knowing the terrors of the Lord, perswade you.* 1. *Not to stand disputing with God about the justice and equity of his ways.* 2. While your time lasteth to save your selves *from these eternal burnings,* from this *worm which never dieth,* this fire *which never goeth out.*

1. *Dispute not then Divine Justice, as to the eternal Destruction of sinners.* You see if you do, you will fall in judgement, though you should be tried by the common laws of men, by the customs and practices of all Nations. Flatter not your selves, that whatever your Ministers tell you, the goodness and mercy of God will not allow him to see his creatures eternally tormented; or that the justice of God cannot allow him to punish the sinnings of a few hours, or years with an eternity of torments. What have they to do with mercy who have out-sinned their days and years of mercy, and despised the long-suffering, patience and forbearance of God, that for twenty, thirty, forty years together was leading them to repentance, and waiting for their conversion, and turning to him; who had a day and time of repentance, but re-

repented not; an eternal life and happiness offered them, but refused it, and have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life? O let all sinners cease disputing Divine Justice, and presuming upon I know not what mercy in God, and let them to day, while it is called to day, not harden their hearts, but study to save themselves from this wrath that is to come! Let me but offer you one or two Meditations.

1. Consider with your selves, *how often you have deserved this eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*; and how many are dropped into it, who never lived so long, nor sinned so much as you have done? Do not you think that an High-way-man, or some other notorious villain, as he passeth by a pair of Gallows upon the road, hath many such a cold thought as this: *How many have perished upon this tree for stealing but a few shillings, or some things of little value? how often have I deserved the same punishment, though I as yet escape*? Oh that you who are yet in a state of guilt and impenitency, would reflect upon your selves, and say, Lord! how many are dropt into the pit of eternal destruction, who never lived so long as I have lived, nor sinned to that degree that I have sinned! yet they are perished, and for ever perished, yet I live, and am out of that pit.

2. Consider *what an hairs-breadth there is betwixt you and this eternal destruction.* You see some in a moment going down into the pit, some in an hours time, some in a weeks time; you sleep over it every night, you tread over it every day; you need not be told how little there is betwixt us and death every day: How suddenly do you see some snatched away on your right hand? others snatched away on your left hand, *Ananias* and *Saphira* drop into the pit with a lye in their mouths? What know you what this day, what the next night may bring forth upon our souls? Let me conclude this with an Exhortation much of that nature, which *Daniel* used to that great King.

Wherefore, O Sinners! let my counsel be acceptable unto you, break off your sins by a true repentance, and your iniquities, by a coming unto Christ; if so be you may save your selves from this wrath to come.

Use 2. In the second place, Let the People of God, who are delivered from this wrath, and by grace translated into the King-

dom of the Lord Jesus Christ, *look back with thankful hearts upon this danger which they have escaped.* They tell a story of a person, who being disordered with drink, and riding over a bridg, where he very narrowly, but insensibly escaped the danger of his life; coming back the next day, and viewing his danger, he was so astonished, as that he dropt down dead: your reflexion upon this eternal destruction, which (through grace) you have escaped, ought to have no such influence upon you. But from the sight of this dreadful wrath to come, which you have escaped, reflect these two more profitable Meditations upon your souls.

1. *What hath God done for me, delivering me from such a death?* Oh how patient was God with me? how many nights did I sleep over hell? how many days? how many years did I tread over these endless torments? Oh! what hath God done for me, in plucking my foot out of this snare, as a brand out of this fire?

2. *What shall I do? what, can I do enough for that God, who hath saved me from such a death?* how often might he have thrown me into Hell? *O Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast saved me from that wrath which is to come.* What an engagement should this lay upon us? *in nostro aterno, to serve the Lord while we have any being.* Let us therefore go away singing with *David, We will extol thee, our God, our King we will praise thee for ever, and ever; every day we will bless thee, and we will praise thee for evermore,* Psal. 145. 1. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name; bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquity? who healeth all thy diseases? who redeemeth thy life from destruction* [yea from eternal destruction] *who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies,* Psal. 103. 1, 2, 3, 4.

SER-

SERMON XLIII.

Psal. LXXIII. 12, 13, 14.

Behold these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency: For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastned every morning.

I Am indeavouring (as I have before told you) to make the seemingly rough ways of *Actual Providence* plain, expounding to you the hard Chapters of Divine Providence; I am still speaking to such questions as relate to distributive justice, considered as in the hand of *Actual Providence*; and here also I have already spoken to several things: I am now come to the last which I intend to speak to. It is the great question which hath posed the great Philosophers of the world, and hath made some of them deny the *being of God*; others deny the *care* and *Providence of God*, or at least restrain it to some particular objects; *How it standeth with the justice of God to punish and chasten his own people, whiles in the mean time he suffereth the way of the wicked to prosper.* To handle this, I have made choice of this Text: it is no wonder that the greatest Philosophers have been posed here, when we find the most eminent servants of God whose names stand upon Sacred Record, at a loss to find out this riddle, and finding it a sad temptation to them. You shall find that *Job* stumbled at it, *Job* 21. 7. and *Jeremy*, though he humbly prefaceth his complaint, *Jer.* 12. 1. with, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, in thy judgements*; yet he must, he must *talk with God about his judgements in this thing*. *Habbakuk* was also something disturbed at it, Hab. 1. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to*

endure

endure any iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is better than himself? In my Text you find the man according to Gods own heart stumbling also at this stone, you have an account of *his fall* by this temptation, from the first *ver.* to the 16. 2. *His recovery of himself*, vers. 17, 18, 19, 20. The Propositions which may be observed from this verse, are two.

Prop. 1. *That in this life ungodly men often prosper, and increase in riches, when in the mean time holy men are plagued and chastened.*

2. Prop. *That this is often a temptation to the best of men, to think that they have cleansed their hearts in vain.*

I say first, God in this life doth often measure out *prosperity* to the worst, and *afflictions to the best of men*. The truth of the Proposition as to matter of fact is evident, both from the Records of Scripture, and the whole course of Divine Providence in the dispensations of it, as through all ages, so in our present age, so as I shall not need spend any time in the proof of it. The Question is,

Quest. How this is consistent with the *Justice*, *Wisdom*, or *Goodness of God, that the ungodly should prosper in the world, and increase in riches, when his people are visited with afflictions every night, and chastned every morning?* I shall add further, *to make use of the most vile and wicked men in the world, to chasten those that are more righteous than they are.* This was *Davids* case, *Saul* and *Absolom*, who (you know) were his great Enemies, were both most vile and wicked persons, and that which *Habbakuk* expresly complained of, *Hab.* 1. 13. *And sufferest the wicked to devour the man that is more righteous than he*; The *Caldeans*, a vile and wicked people, to devour the *Jews*, who were the only people God had upon the Earth at that time. Here are three Questions to be spoken to:

1. *How it standeth with the Justice of God to measure out good things to the vilest and worst of men?*

2. *How it standeth with the Justice and Goodness of God, by his Actual Providence, to dispense out evil things to the best of men?*

3. *How it is consistent with the Justice of God, to suffer the wicked to devour the man that is more righteous than himself?*

I will

I will begin with the first, where we must enquire, 1. *What good things wicked men have.* 2. *We must vindicate the Justice of God in the distribution of them to them.* The good things which a wicked man hath, can be only *the good things of this life*; for the good things of another life, they have no part nor portion in that matter. 2. They can be none of the *good things of grace*, special grace; they are *without God, without Christ, without hope.* Hence must follow, that the good things of which alone they are capable, are either *bona corporis*, the *good things of the body*; such are *life, health, strength*, &c. or the good things of *fortune*, as the Heathens call them, such are *riches, honours, pleasures*, or the *good things of the mind*, such as are *learning, wit*, &c. These good things wicked men are capable of, the wicked may *live, become old, be mighty in power*, Job 21. 7. There may be *no bands in their death*, their strength may be firm, they may not be in trouble as other men, as the *Psalmist* speaketh here in this Psalm. Now this being first premised, I come strictly to speak to the Question.

1. In the first place I desire that may be remembred, which in some of my former discourses I commended to your observation, *That as adversity is not the portion of every child of God, so prosperity is not the portion of every sinner:* nay if you fix your eyes upon any certain number of good men that live up to the rule of Gods word, and a like number of leud and wicked men, who live without a God in the world; you will find that as to outward prosperity is on the side of them that fear God: *Wisdom hath riches and honour in her hand*, as well as grace and glory; that which cheats us, is the odds that is in numbers betwixt men who fear God, and such as fear him not, but fix your eye upon any number of certain persons on either side, and you will see that Gods fulfilling of his promises to good men for the things of this life, such as health, long-life, riches, honour, *&c.* to such as fear him are not made in vain, and the justification of Gods truth in them, doth not stand in need of those distinctions which we ordinarily make use of, they are only some that God prospereth.

2. As there is no godly man but hath sin enough to justify in his afflictions; so there are many *wicked men, who may have done some service for God*, which will justity God in such rewardings of them. It is but just with God (as I have shewed you) for

God

God to reward men for the service which they have done for God; he rewarded *Jehu*, *Assyria*, and *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*.

3. I have shewed you, *that God with the rewards of this life, doth often reward, and with the punishments of this life doth often punish relations in their correlates*; so God may reward, if not the *person*, for some service he hath done for God; yet he may reward a *Father*, a *Grandfather* in the riches, and honour, and outward good things which the present sinner doth enjoy: it was thus you know in the case of *Jehu*, the prosperity of *Joash* and *Jeroboam*, and another or two descended from *Jehu*, was but the reward which *Jehu* had for his service against the house of *Ahab*. But I have enlarged my discourse upon all these things before, and do only hint them here.

4. The *good things of this life, are not truly good*; they are only called by us good, because of their *gratefulness to our sense*; they are in themselves but things of a middle nature, good or bad, as we use them well or ill. It is the saying of *Nierembergius* (an acute Author, though a *Jesuite*), *Fortunantur improbi larvatis hujus vitæ bonis ad correctionem nostræ opinionis, ne putemus illa bona posthumæ nostræ fœlicitati comparanda.* Wicked men, saith he, are inriched with the specious good things of this life, to correct our judgments, that we may not judg that those things are worthy to be compared with that felicity, which we after this life shall enjoy. The wiser Philosophers, in their disputes about the happiness of man in this life, which they rightly enough determined must lye in the enjoyments of the greatest good, and their further quest, what that *summum bonum* was, determined it could not be the *good things of the body*, nor the good things of *fortune* (as they call them, we speaking more like Christians, call them the good things of Common Providence), but at last determined (the wiser of them I mean) that it was the goods of the mind in conjunction with a competency, or a moderate portion of the good things of the other natures. But Religion teacheth us to consider man in another notion than they by the conduct of meer natural reason could consider him, as a *creature* under an *ordination to an eternal existence*, and capable of an *union* with, and an *enjoyment* of God. Now upon these two *Hypotheses*, it is impossible that the good things of this life should be *vere bona*, truly good things, and that upon these two grounds:

1. *They reach not to another life.* What is our inch of time to Eternity? Now all these things leave us in the very hour that our soul goes out into an eternal state; Riches, honours, pleasures, strength of body, *&c.* all leave us when the body dyeth.

2. Again, *While we are in the possession of our breath, all these things do signify just nothing to the felicity of the soul,* which is far the better and nobler part of man: the interest of the soul lyeth in its union and communion with God, to which none of these contribute any thing, so that the objection proceedeth upon an hypothesis that is meerly false; it supposeth that God distributeth things truly and properly good to wicked men, he only distributeth such things to them as have a shew and appearance of good, such things as to their palats and sense are good, but have nothing of goodness in them, further than that they are a *viaticum*, things of necessary use to support us in our way to eternity, and to uphold our beings in the world, while we are here doing the work which God hath given us to do, and finishing our course; and for that, what our Saviour said is true, Our life doth not lye in the abundance of that which we possess.

5. Though they be not things in themselves good, nor absolutely and compleatly good; yet having something of goodness in them, and a great goodness relative to the fancy, apprehension, and desires of sinners (for there be many that will say, *Who will shew us any good*)? understanding nothing else but corn, and wine, and oyl, a long life, an healthful body, a great estate, honour and power, *&c.* It is but equal that God should gratify their senses, and please them with some such things as they account the goods, the greatest goods, *That they might not be without some experience of the riches of divine liberality and bounty.* God must be allowed to have a relation, unto the vilest men and women; he is not indeed their Father by *Adoption*, but he is their Father by *Creation.* It is not reasonable that any of Gods Creatures, *Absque ulla liberalitatis experientia elabantur*, should go out of the world without some experience of the divine liberality and goodness. I remember it is said of *Abraham*, that for the Children he had by Concubines, he gave them portions, and sent them away, *Gen.* 25. 5. *Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac: but unto the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away, &c.* We may say the

same of God, he gives *grace* and *glory* to his *Isaacs*, to the children of the promise; but as for others, he gives them gifts of the good things of this life; *festinat largiri*, saith an acute Author, God makes haste to give out his largesses of mercy to them, because they are not capable of the mercies of another life. God hath time in eternity to reward his Saints, but after this life he hath no time to give sinners any thing. And this appeareth the more reasonable, because the worst of men are not only Gods Creatures, but may be in some things Gods Servants, as the *Assyrian* and *Nebuchadnezzar*, and *Cyrus* were Gods Servants: there are very few wicked men but God maketh some use of, if it be but to scourge his own people, for that was the service which the *Assyrian* did God, *Isa.* 10. But this I have before spoken to more largely.

6. It is very reasonable, if we consider *what there is in these good things of this life, which God giveth out to sinners, of the nature of means on Gods part, to allure and perswade them to turn unto him.* The Apostle telleth us, *That the goodness of God leadeth men to repentance*, Rom. 2. 4. It doth so *ex natura sua*, of its own nature, though through the wickedness of their heart, it but makes them worse; so *Acts* 14. 17. *He left not himself without witness, in that he did good; and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*: and this he did, *vers.* 16. *to nations whom he suffered to walk in their own ways.* The business is not what these things prove eventually to sinners, so indeed they prove but snares to their souls, that is, accidentally through the misimprovement they make of them, by reason of the lust and corruption that is in their hearts: nor is Gods intention and design in giving them the thing to be considered, *but what they are in themselves*, and of their own nature; so they are things which they desire more than better things, which are grateful and pleasant to them, and should therefore oblige them to serve, and please that God, who so gratifyeth and pleaseth them in things which they make their delight, and the matter of their choice.

7. What in the last place, if we should say, that it is reasonable God should give them these things, as one expresseth it, *In infortunii apparatum*; *that if they will not use them to their own good and advantage, yet they might give Gods glory an advantage by justifying him in their condemnation upon their abusing the goodness of*

God

God. They tell us a story of *Philip King of Macedon*, and of some noble *Romans*, that they were wont to pray to their Idols, that they would mix their prosperity with some grains of adversity. It is a dreadful speech, *Luk.* 6. *Wo to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation.* It is a saying of an ingenious Author, a *Jesuite*,

Insignitur solum titulus opulentiæ ad justitiam damnationis, quia licet ipsa crimen non sit multis fundatur criminibus, aut fundat multa; vel sceleribus paritur, vel scelera parturit—solitarius titulus fortunæ infamis est, nisi aliquid pietatis agnomen purget; Merem. That is,

"Riches is only a famous title to justify God in the damnation "of a sinner, for though they in themselves be no crime, yet they "are a building founded on many sins, or they lay a foundation for "many; they either are bred of many sins, or else they bring "forth many——The title of outward prosperity alone, is an infamous title, if it hath not some addition of Piety. The wrath of God smoaked against the *Israelites*, whiles the flesh was betwixt their teeth. God tells them by the Prophet *Hosea*, chap. 13. *v.* 11. *He gave them a King in his wrath.* There is a wonderful wisdom of Divine Providence seen in the prosperity of sinners, their long-life, health, successes, riches, honours: for one of these two things follow; some of them are by them made better, and brought home to God, as children by some slighty rewards are won unto their duty; or if the Providence of God obtaineth not this effect, it faileth not in another, *viz. The justification of God before Angels and men, in his righteous condemnation of them:* He hath given them time to repent, and they repented not; he hath given them mercies alluring them to their duty, but they have not been won by them; he hath *piped unto them, but they have not danced:* and thus much may serve to have justified the Providence of God, and shewed you the reasonableness of its motion, in the distribution of the good things of this life to sinners.

Quest. 2. *It remains in the second place to shew you, how it consisteth with the righteousness and goodness of God to dispense out evil things to his own people.* *Job* complaineth of his sad tryals, and *David*, that he was *visited every morning, and chastened every moment*; and we see in our daily experience, that many are

the tryals of the most righteous servants of God, and those of all sorts.

1. I say in the first place, This is not the lot of *all the servants of God*, it is only the portion of *some of them*; some of those who fear God are rich, honourable, mighty in power, men of good estates, prospering in the world: there was a rich *Abraham*, a rich *Joseph*, a great man in *Egypt*, and a rich *Joseph* of *Arimathea*; *David*, the man according to Gods own heart was a great Prince, so was *Solomon*; nay, as I said before, were we not deceived by the odds in the number of Sinners and Saints, I doubt whether we should not find that God with the good things of this life, doth not more universally bless his own servants than he doth others.

2. Suppose that some, yea that many of the People of God in this world are tossed with tempests, and afflicted; yet surely there is *none of them but hath sin enough to justifie God in their punishments of this nature.* I have in my former discourses proved to you, that notwithstanding the *satisfaction* which Christ hath paid to the Justice of his Father, and the *Covenant of Grace made betwixt Christ and his Father, on the behalf of his Elect*, and the *pardoning of their sins*; yet it is consistent enough with Divine Justice, to punish the sins of Gods own People, with the afflictions and punishments of this life: *they may be chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world*, 1 Cor. 11. 32. Now the most righteous man sinneth seven times a day; nor doth any know how often he offendeth: *and why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his iniquity?* Lam. 3.

3. If you could imagine any person to have lived so innocently, as that he had not by his personal sins deserved those temporal afflictions with which God visiteth him; yet (as you have heard) *God may visit the sins of Parents, of proparents, upon Children*, and afflictions of this nature, may come upon good people, although not for their personal sins, yet for the sins of their Parents; and this is but righteousness with God, as I have heretofore shewed you in a set discourse upon that Subject.

4. But there is yet a fourth thing, which I would speak to a little more fully in answer to this Question, and that indeed takes away the Subject of the question upon the point. As I said of the good things of this life, they are not truly good, so I may say of the

the evil things of this life, they are not *truly evil*: as the other are but *larvata bona*, such things as have but a *Vizard* of goodness; so these are but *larvata mala*, such things as have but a shew and appearance of evil in them; they are only sensible evils, and our senses do but cheat our Souls in judging them evil. This I will spend a little time to evince to you.

1. In the first place, *These are not those things which defile the Soul.* It was a saying of *Augustines*, *There is a great deal of difference betwixt a mans being evil, and suffering evil.* Many a Soul is made better by affliction, none is made worse by it, unless it be by accident. Nothing but sin defileth a Soul: a man may be poor in this world yet rich in grace, he may have a sickly body, yet an healthy Soul he may be ignoble in the world, yet have the honour to be called the Child of God; those things alone are evil, which make the Soul filthy, and unclean in the sight of God. Afflictions tend to make the Soul white, to purge it and to cleanse it, they are therefore compared to fire, and help to make our faith to appear more precious than Gold that perisheth; they do not prejudice a Soul as to its grace, nor yet as to its glory; none was ever condemned by God because he was sickly or low in the world: Afflictions are only ingrateful to our sense grievous to our flesh; but as to our Soul and inward man, they touch it not, they do only sully the surface of a man, they do no injury to all to his better part.

This Argument is plain, *what doth the Soul of a Christian no hurt is no evil.* Why should I call that evil which neither ever did me any hurt nor ever will?

2. *The Afflictions of this life are such things as the best of Gods people have chosen and preferred before the contrary supposed good.* This is a piece of that answer which *Salvian* long since, gave to this difficulty of Providence.

Humiles sunt Religiosi? hoc volunt: pauperes sunt? pauperie delectantur? sine ambitione, ambitum respuunt; in honore sunt? honorem respuunt: lugent? lugere gestiunt: infirmi sunt? infirmitate delectantur, Salvian. de Prov.

"Are good people (saith he) in a low condition? they desire "to be so. Are they poor? they are pleased with poverty; they "without ambition refuse the objects of ambition, hunt not af- "ter great things. Are they without honour? they refuse the "honours of this world. Do they mourn? they rejoyce to "mourn. Are they weak? they triumph in their weakness,

Heb.

Heb. 11.24. *By faith Moses refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter, chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.* The Apostle refused *Simon Magus* his mony, and that with a more than ordinary detestation. *Agur* indeed prayeth against extreme poverty, as a condition exposing him to temptation; but he also upon the same account prayeth against *Riches*. *Lord*, saith he, *give me neither poverty nor riches. Most glady* (saith the blessed Apostle, 2 *Cor.* 12.10.) *will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christs sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong.* The Apostles sing in Prison, and *rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.* The primitive Christians *suffered joyfully the spoiling of their goods.* No man chuseth what he apprehendeth evil, but those things the world call evils have very ordinarily been the choice of the best, and most judicious servants of God.

3. How can those things be called *evils, which have a tendency to make the man better.* Afflictions both from Gods intention, and their own nature, have a *tendency* to the making of the Souls of Saints better. God intends them for that purpose, for they are his fatherly Providence for them; all those *twigs* which make up the *rods* with which God lasheth his people, grow out of the *root* and stock of *Divine love.* The rods with which God scourgeth Sinners, are gathered of a Tree that standeth upon the brink of the bottomless pit; but those with which God chastiseth his people, are gathered of a Tree that stands in the midst of the Paradise of God. Nay afflictions have in themselves a tendency to better the Souls of Saints. They are but like a warm wall to the fruit-Tree, which makes the fruit fairer; you observe that young Children shoot out in sickness, you may observe the Saints too shooting out upon their afflictions; O how many of them have we seen shot out, in *humility*, in *faith*, in *patience*, in *heavenly-mindedness*, and *contempt of the world*, &c. It is a saying of *Salvian* upon this Argument, *Ideo Sancti viri sunt infirmiores, quia si fortes fuerint vix Sancti esse poterint.* "Saints, saith he, are there-"fore weak, because it is an hard thing to be strong and Saints "too: we may say it is hard to be rich in Gold and Silver, and rich in grace too; to be great in the world, and great with God too; to have an healthy body, and an healthy Soul too. It is

true

true there is not an absolute inconsistency, betwixt worldly prosperity and grace. *Job* and *Abraham* were rich, *Joseph* and *Daniel* were both honourable, and had great places; Our Saviour doth not say that it is simply impossible, for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God; but he saith, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* Let the word be understood of the beast called a *Camel*, or for a *Cable-rope*, and by the *Eye of a Needle*, whether you understand what we call so, or a gate, a little gate in *Hierusalem* which some say had that name; It is not simply impossible for a *Camel*, or a *Cable-rope* to pass through the Eye of a Needle: it is a thing may be done, if you cut the one into pieces small enough, or sufficiently untwist the other; but it asks a great deal of labour, it must be done with a great deal of difficulty.

There are three things in which the felicity of the Soul lieth, 1. *In its favour with God.* 2. *In its conformation to God.* 3. *In its beatifical vision of God.* I shall shew you that some of those things, which we call evils, have an influence upon all these.

1. They do indeed none of them merit the love and favour of God, but *they are testimonies and indications of this love*, and this is eminently true of such as are sufferings for *the name of Christ*: the Apostle speaketh of Afflictions in general, *whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Child whom he receiveth.* Christ saith particularly of the sufferings of his people for him, *They shall turn unto you for a testimony, Luk.* 21. 13. And the blessed Apostle, 2 *Thes.* 1. 5. saith of them, that *they are manifest tokens of the righteous judgment of God*, that, saith he, *you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you suffer.* It is a saying of *Salvian*; *Quis tam profundi Cordis*, &c. He means, who is so shallow as to think that the rewards of the Saints are *carnes & fortitudines*, abundance of the good things of this life; the love of God, saith he, is seen in higher things than these, and in things of a quite different nature from these. It is a passage of *Augustine*, *Surgunt procellæ hujus stagni, vides malos florere, bonos laborare, tentatio est, fluctus est, & dicit anima tua, O Deus! Deus! Hæccine est justitia tua, ut mali floreant, & boni laborent: Deus tibi respondet, Hæccine est fides tua? Hæccine tibi promisi, aut ad hoc factus es Christianus, ut in sæculo floreres?* Aug. *in* Psal. 25. "The storms (saith he)

"of

"of this Pit arise, you see sinners flourish and Saints in adversity,
"this is a temptation; it is a wave, and your Soul says, O God!
"O God! Is this thy Justice, That Sinners should prosper, and
"thy Saints should be oppressed? God answereth thee, is this
"thy faith? wert thou made a Christian for this that thou should-
"est flourish in this life?

It was the rich glutton in the Gospel, who had his good things in this life. Gods *Lazarus* had evil things; far be it from us, saith *Salvian*, to think that an Argument of Gods neglect of us, which is an Argument of Gods further love to us.

2. Doth the happiness of a Soul lie in its *conformation to God?* to *the image of his Son?* (as the Apostle speaketh) Afflictions highly conduce to this end.

1. This is peculiarly true of *such Afflictions as a Christian suffers for the gospel and for the name of the Lord Jesus*; and therefore the Apostle triumpheth in this, 1 *Phil.* 20. That Christ should be *magnified in his body, whether by life or death*; and therefore speaks of his sufferings of this nature, as the matter of his expectation, his hope, his boldness, and what he was confident he should not be ashamed of: and he prayeth for a fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, *Phil.* 3. 12. *Ignatius* is reported after all his sufferings to have said, *Now I begin to be a disciple. Now* (saith *Anthony Person* a Martyr of our own Nation) *I am dressed like a Souldier of Christ*, when he had put some of the straw that was prepared to kindle the wood which was to burn him, *on the top of his Head.*

2. But, *All sorts of afflictions have an influence upon the Soul to make it more like to the Lord Jesus Christ.* Sufferings in the flesh for *Christs sake* make us conformable to Christs flesh, to Christ in his state of humiliation, to Christ upon the Cross, but all the Afflictions of the Saints conduce to make them like unto the Lord Jesus Christ in his holiness, and purity, that now belongeth unto Christ, and is inseparable from him in his estate of glory, and exaltation: in that he died, he died once and but once, and shall hang on the Cross no more, wear a Crown of thorns no more, but his purity and holiness, that is essential to him: now the Afflictions of Gods people make them like unto Christ in this. This is an argument which I have had occasion before to touch upon, and therefore I shall be the shorter in it now.

1. *They*

1. *They wonderfully conduce to take the hearts of the people of God off from the Earth, and to fix them upon Heaven.* Poverty takes off the heart from the love of riches, and delivereth it from an evil covetousness; *sickness* weaneth the Soul from the *love of this life*. Now holiness lieth so much in the Sequestration of the heart from the world, that in *Greek*, an *holy man* signifies a man that is not earthly. It is an hard thing for a man to be possessed of much of the Earth, and not to have his heart buried in it: it is true we should *rejoyce as if we rejoyced not*, and *possess as if we possessed not*; but this is *an hard saying* to flesh and blood, Who is there almost who can hear, who can learn it? how rare is that Soul which liveth in the full fruition of the things of this life, that can yet keep his heart loose from them, and sequestred for God? Prosperity, plenty, a great affluence of the good things of this life are as birdlime to a Souls wings, and keep it from mounting up to God. I remember it is a saying of *Salvian*, *Repugnanti corporis valetudine quæ optamus facere non facimus*; many a time, the want of strength, and health in our bodies, hindreth us from doing that sin which we have a mind to commit. The great enjoyments of the world are not only the things which make men unwilling to die, but both they, and the great businesses and employments of the world, are those things which keep Christians fettered; they cannot pray, they cannot wait upon God in ordinances, they cannot fast, they cannot solemnly worship God as others less intangled can: amongst other advantages therefore of a poor and afflicted state an ingenious Author reckons this for one, he saith it is *puritatis condimentum*, the pickle of purity and holiness. They are the very salt of the Earth, without which the best of men would putrify in their full enjoyment. They are (you know) sharp, and acrimonious things, that are the Enemies to putrefaction: salt seasoneth things, vinegar makes a good pickle preservative of things *Sugar* quickly corrupteth. It is true there are too too many that have little enough of these things, and as little of any gracious habits, poverty, and afflictions will not give grace; but that is a rare Christian that abounds with the affluences of this life, and yet keepeth his integrity, is as pure, as holy, as full of duty, as others who have less of this worlds goods; they are no fountains of grace, but they are great preservatives of it.

2. Nay this is not all; in the second place, *they conduce much to the improvements of grace, especially of faith and patience.* They are two habits of grace, that like *Solomons* brother and friend are made for adversity. *Tribulatio patientiæ Robur operatur, patientia fidei probationem parit.* Tribulation addeth to the strength of patience; and patience *bringeth forth the tryal of Faith.* If the people of God never met with affliction, how should the trial of their faith appear *more pretious than that of Gold which perisheth?* How should *their patience have its perfect work?* Faith is never seen till we be out of sight of the thing which we pretend to trust God for. *Hope which is seen is no hope, but if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.* *Job*'s faith in God, and love to God, was seen in his trusting in him, and adhering to him while God seemed to be killing of him. Practical habits are improved by exercise. The Souls of the Saints ordinarily come out of their trials, more strong in faith, more confirmed in hope, more exercised in patience, more flaming in love to God; how then shall we call those things evils which instead of depraving the Soul and making it worse, do tend to the improvement of the Soul and making of it *better*?

3. Lastly, the highest good which the Soul is capable of is, *the beatifical vision, and enjoyment of God to all Eternity.* To this the low estate of the people of God doth exceedingly conduce, 2 *Cor.* 4. 17. *Our light Affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Those who shall sit with God upon thrones, are those *which continue with him in tribulations.* The *great multitude* which St. *John* saw, *Rev.* 7. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. which no man could *number, of all Nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, which stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands,* upon inquiry were found to be those *who came out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,* v. 14. Our sufferings in this life do not merit glory, alas there is no *perfection* in our suffering, and sufferings are but our duty; nor is there any proportion, betwixt *light and momentany afflictions,* and a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; but they work for us a far more exceeding weight of glory. Thou art mistaken then, O Christian in thy Judgment. God doth not (as thou dreamest) distribute good things to his Enemies, nor yet

evil

evil things to his friends: the business is no more than this, *Deus per ficta mala punit suos, & per larvata bona impios remunerat. Nierem.* "God indeed by things in appearance good rewardeth "wicked men, and by things in appearance evil he punisheth those "that are his own people.

Nor let any one think to quibble here, as if God mocked either the one or the other, for although these things which the wicked enjoy, are not *real* and *substantial good things*; yet as they are the things which they desire, delight in, which they chuse above other things more solidly, and substantially good, they are to them really good, and they have a tendency to make them better; and the afflictions of the people of God, as they have in them an enmity to their flesh, and are ingrateful to their senses, so they have something of real evil in them; but comparatively with other evils, or the greater good things which God hath prepared for his people, they have nothing of evil in them. In short, every observing man discerneth the difference betwixt the love of an indulgent cockering mother, and a wise, and prudent father. The father sheweth his love to the Child, by fitting it to live in the world another day, learning it to be a man, to know the world, and to converse with it: to this purpose, he inureth it to hardship, he sends it to school, and keepeth it under a severe discipline: thus he sheweth his love to his Child, and when the Child cometh to years of discretion the Child thanks him for it, though under the discipline of its youth possibly the Child thinks the father its worst enemy. The mother possibly sheweth her love by cockering the Child, dandling it upon her knee, providing fine clothes for it, giving it sweet-meats, *&c.* Which things indeed have nothing of true love in them, and do only tend to emasculate the Child, and make it of an effeminate temper, and more unfit to converse with, or live in the world another day. *Patrium Deus habet in bonos animum*, (saith an ingenious Author) God loves good people, not like a mother but like a father: *whom he loveth he chastneth, and scourgeth every Child whom he receiveth*; he keeps them at the school of affliction, and educateth them under the discipline of the rods, and *ferulaes* of many trials, and afflictions: he suffereth not the world which is their natural mother according to the flesh, to hug them in her bosom, nor to dandle them upon her knees; he chasteneth them that they might not be

condemned with the wicked; he hath said, *blessed is he whom thou chastenest, and teachest him out of thy Law.* This is but a fatherly dealing of God with his people. God thus fitteth them for Heaven, polisheth them for shafts in his own quiver, by this darkness makes them fit for the Saints in light. Why sayest thou, O Christian, that the Lords ways are not equal, or that the Lord dealeth hardly with thee? God dealeth with thee, but as every wise and prudent father dealeth with the Child of his dearest love: and thus I have spoken to two of the Questions which fall under this head. But there is yet a third would be spoken to, and the rather, because it may be a temptation that seized the hearts of many of Gods people in former times, that is, *How it consisteth with the justice, wisdom, and goodness of God in the motions of his Providence to make the vilest, and worst of men his Instruments to chasten the best, and dearest of his own people:* it was *Habbakuks* complaint, *Hab.* 1. 13. *why holdest thou thy peace, when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he, and maketh men as fishes of the Sea, as the creeping things which have no ruler over them?* But that will be my next Text, where I shall speak something relating to that dispensation of God, and afterwards shall more largely apply both what I have spoken, and what I shall further speak on this Argument.

SER-

SERMON XLIV.

Habbakuk I. 13.

Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold evil, and canſt not look on iniquity: wherefore lookeſt thou on them that deal treacherouſly and holdeſt thy Tongue, when the wicked man devoureth the man that is more righteous than he; And makeſt men as the Fiſh of the Sea, as the creeping-things, that have no ruler over them?

I Begin (as you ſee) where I left in my laſt exerciſe. I left with a quotation out of the prophecy of *Habbakuk* which is now my Text, nor could any thing be more proper; for you ſee it containeth in terms the Queſtion I am this day ſpeaking to. In the beginning of this Chapter and Prophecy, the Prophet had been complaining unto God of the exceeding wickedneſs, and incorrigibleneſs of the *Jews*. God replying to him had told him, what poſſibly he did not expect (deſiring not the ruin but reformation of his people) that he was about to put an end to their wickedneſs, *v.* 6. Raiſing up the *Caldeans a bitter and haſty nation, which ſhould* march through the breadth of the land, to poſſeſs the dwellings which were not theirs; *terrible*, and *dreadful*, &c. An enemy every way qualified to execute Gods utmoſt vengeance upon this people. This quite ſurpriſeth and aſtoniſheth the good prophet, and ſends him in haſt unto God again, *v.* 13. ſaith he, *Art not thou from everlaſting, O Lord my God, mine holy one? we ſhall not dye, O Lord, thou haſt ordained them for Judgement, and O mighty God thou haſt eſtabliſhed them for correction*; then follow the words of my Text, *Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold evil, and canſt not look on iniquity: wherefore lookeſt thou on them that deal treacherouſly, and holdeſt thy tongue, when the wicked devoureth the*

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man, that is more righteous then he? Habbakuk lookt upon this as a very ſad diſpenſation, and what ſtumbled him as to the righteouſneſs of God, therefore he puts it in that phraſe, *the man that is more righteous than he*, and addeth, *and makeſt men as the fiſhes of the Sea, as creeping things of the Earth which have no ruler over them.* Thoſe brute ſenſitive creatures are not ruled by any rules of juſtice or righteouſneſs; thoſe of them that have moſt natural *ſtrength* and *power*, devour thoſe who have leſs: but now men are reaſonable creatures, and ſhould be acted by principles of reaſon and juſtice amongſt them, *might* ſhould not overcome *right*. But, O Lord, in this diſpenſation of thy Providence thou ſeemeſt to govern the reaſonable part of the world like the brutiſh, and ſenſitive part of it. The *Jews* though they be a ſinful people, yet they are more *righteous* than the *Caldeans*, they are a brutiſh people and have no right againſt the *Jews*; ſhall thy Providence ſo order the affaires of the world, that thoſe who have moſt power in their hand, though they have no right, ſhall trample down thy people, and eat them up like bread? Lord! this were to make men like *the fiſh of the Sea, like the creeping things* of the Earth, which have none over them, to govern them by any rules of juſtice or righteouſneſs. Lord, why doth thy Providence thus govern humane affaires? This I conceive the ſenſe of the words. The queſtion which remains to be ſpoken to is this.

Queſt. *How it can conſiſt with the Juſtice of God in the motions of his Actual Providence to ſuffer wicked men to devour thoſe who are more righteous than themſelves.*

I am the more willing to ſpeak to this becauſe it is a diſpenſation under which many, of thoſe that fear the Lord in this nation have ſuffered: we have ſeen good men rifled, their goods taken from them, we cannot ſay but they have deſerved this, and far more than this from the hand of Divine Juſtice; but though they have deſerved this, yet we are ready to think it is hard that they ſhould ſuffer this from ſuch *miſcreants* as take the Spoil, and God will certainly one day fetch *the blood of his people and their abominations out of their mouths.* We are prone to think that God ſhould not ſuffer his people to be devoured, by thoſe who are more unrighteous then they are. The Text gives you an account.

1. *Of a great disorder in the world,* at least a dispensation of Providence which *Habakkuk* thought so. *Men dealt treacherously; the wicked devoured the men who were more righteous than themselves.*

2. *It gives you an account of Gods carriage under this disorder. God looked upon men,* that is, he seemed to *look upon the men that dealt treacherously, and to hold his peace* while *Sinners devoured the more righteous persons.* God by the motions of his Providence seemed rather to favour, than frown upon these disorders. Hence might be observed these two propositions.

1. Prop. *That it is no unusual dispensation of Providence for God to suffer the wicked to devour those that are more righteous than themselves.*

2. Prop. *That this dispensation hath been matter of stumbling, and a very sore temptation even to the servants of God.*

For the first as to matter of fact there is nothing more demonstrable, look over the whole History of Scripture, the History of all times, you will find it true; the world began with *Cains* killing *Abel,* it went on with the *Egyptians,* the *Amalekites,* the *Philistines,* the *Babilonians* devouring of the only people which God had in the world. Now I say this hath been heretofore, and doubtless is at this time a great temptation to Gods people. *Habakkuk* complains of it in the Text. *Job* complained, *Job* 30. 1. *That those who were younger than he had him in derision, even those whose Fathers he would have disdained to have set with the dogs of his table. Shemei* a dead dog; as he called him, cursed *David* and *Doeg* the *Informer* prevails against all the Lords Priests, *Judas* another *Informer* devoureth him who is the Lord of life. It is a dispensation that hath often put the servants of God into unseemly passions, *James* and *John* would have had *fire come down from Heaven* as in *Elijahs* time, to have destroyed the *Samaritans. Peter* was out of patience to see the *Informer* come with a company, with *Swords and Staves to take his Master,* and in his passion draweth a Sword, and with it cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest. *David* himself when God offered him the choice of three Judgments, desired *rather to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men.* I say it is

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and hath often been a very sore temptation, advantaged partly from Nature, partly from some Religious reflections.

That which in *humane nature advantageth this temptation*, is, 1. The *disdain every man naturally hath to suffer an injury from one beneath himself:* when *Gideon* would have had his Son *Jether*, have fallen upon those two Eastern Princes *Zeba* and *Zalmuna*, they said rise thou up, and fall upon us; men have a natural disdain and scorn to suffer from their inferiours, we see it in every days experience. Now although every child of God is low in his own eyes, and in honour preferreth every Saint before himself; yet, as St. *Paul* sometimes *magnified his office* against the false Apostles, and counterfeits of his age; though he judged himself the least of the Apostles, and unworthy of that great Name: so they cannot but *magnifie themselves*, in comparison of open profane miscreants, that are the scum, and off-scouring of the place in which they live; such as are common drunkards, lyars, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, and guilty of other debaucheries, the very scabs of the body politick, and spots of the Assemblies to which they are united.

2. Every man naturally hath a *regret at the receiving of injuries from those from whom he hath deserved no such thing.* Now the People of God are persons of innocence, who have done no wrong to their worst Enemies; they have loved their Enemies, prayed for them, been ready to do any offices of love to them, and know not how to bear an injury from those to whom they have done no wrong. This was that which troubled *Davids* Spirit, *Psal.* 35. 12, 13. *They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my Soul, but as for me when they were sick, my cloathing was sackcloath, I humbled my Soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into my own bosom; I behaved my self as though he had been my friend, or brother, I bowed down heavily, as one that mourned for my mother. But in mine adversity they rejoyced, and gathered themselves together, yea the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; yea they did tear me, and ceased not, with hypocritical mockers at feasts they gnashed upon me with their teeth. Lord how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my Soul from their destructions.*

2. This temptation is likewise advantaged from some *Religious reflections.*

1. From a reflection upon the purity, *and holiness of God. O Lord* (saith our Prophet in my Text,) *thou art of purer Eyes than*

then to behold iniquity. How a just and pure and holy God should *look on,* and *hold his peace* to see a company of vile wretches tearing and devouring his own people, this is a knowledg (at first view) too wonderful for them.

2. From a reflexion *upon the promises and threatnings of God*; they look into the holy word of God, and find that full of promises of good to Gods People, of threatnings of wrath and vengeance to wicked men; instead of this, they see vile men building up Palaces to themselves upon their ruins, and adorning themselves with their Ornaments; the houses of the profane furnished, and adorned with that which is not theirs; instead of the wicked mans preparing garments, and the just mans putting them on (as *Job* speaketh) they see good and righteous men preparing garments, and leud and ungodly men put them on; they see the spoil of such as fear the Lord in the tents of leud and ungodly men.

3. From a reflexion upon the Decrees of God: *O Lord,* (saith our Prophet) *thou hast ordained them for destruction; O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction:* they consider leud and wicked men, as men whom God by a fixed act of his Will hath ordained to judgment, as persons who by the *established* counsel of God are to be destroyed, and they cannot expound the Providence of God into a consistency with his eternal purpose, when they see them not only live, prosper, and grow old, but also live by the death of such as fear God, and build their nests on high with feathers which they have plucked from their wings. From these, and other causes, ariseth this trouble and coil in the spirits of Gods people. *Fluctus est, Tentatio est* (as *Augustine* saith) it is a great wave, a great temptation and trouble; and even Gods own people here, are ready to think they see a knot in the thred of providence, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence in the even ways of the Lords dealing. Let me indeavour in a few words to unty this knot, to remove this stone. Four or five things I shall speak, one or other of which, or all together, will make this way of the Lord plain to every sober and understanding Christian.

1. *How is God to his people more hard, or unrighteous in such a dispensation, than he was to the son of his deareſt love?* Our blessed Lord hath taught us, *That the Disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord; it is enough for the Disciple that he be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord,* Matt. 10. 24, 25.

10. 24, 25. 'Tis true, the chief *Informer* againſt our Lord, was one of his hoſhold, *Judas*; but he was *a ſon of perdition*, the only ill member of all the 12. Who were *his witneſſes*, but a company of perjured wretches, who could not agree in their teſtimony? Who mockt him and ſcourged him? *Herod*, a monſter for all manner of wickedneſs. Who were they that ſpit upon him; that cried out *crucifie him, crucifie him*; that gave him Gall and Vinegar to drink? were they not the *abjects of the people*? Thou art not able to conceive of Gods righteouſneſs, in giving thee over, and thy eſtate over to a Renegado, an apoſtate from his former profeſſion, to wretches who make no conſcience what they ſay, what they ſwear, what they do: How was he righteous in giving over the Son of his love to ſuch wretches? We are never ſo like to our Lord and Maſter, as when we are betrayed by a *Judas*, informed againſt, and teſtified againſt by falſe and perjured wretches, mockt and abuſed by the abjects and off-ſcouring of the people: If God might be a juſt and righteous God in ſuffering theſe things to be done to the green tree, ſurely he may ſuffer them to be done unto us who are dry trees. Thou art troubled that God ſhould ſuffer profane ſcoffers to call thee hypocrite, and haſt a temptation to think God is not juſt to thee in ſuffering it; knoweſt, or remembreſt thou not *what contradiction of ſinners Chriſt endured*, how they ſaid of him, that he did caſt out Devils, by *Beelzebub the Prince of Devils*? When thy ſpirit riſeth againſt thy adverſaries, oh think of Chriſt who was the Captain of all our Salvation. But further yet,

2. Before thou in thy thoughts paſſeſt ſentence againſt God and his righteouſneſs, conſider with thy ſelf *by whom wouldeſt thou have God to chaſtiſe his people*? It is written That *all who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, muſt ſuffer perſecution*. Now ſuppoſing perſecution one of thoſe *ſpecies* or kinds of affliction which God hath a liberty to Scourge, and chaſten his people by; Who ſhould be the perſecutors? couldeſt thou expect that the *ſeed of the woman* ſhould *break the womans head*? That ſuch who have taſted of the love of God, ſhould bite and devour one another? Indeed ſometimes (through the prevalence of luſts and paſſions) it proves ſo through miſtakes, and ſuch miſapprehenſions as the beſt are ſubject to and this but in particular rare caſes.

1. But it *ſuiteth not the ingenuous nature of Gods people to do injury to others*: Indeed it ſuiteth not any perſons (though of little

little acquaintance with God) if they be persons of any goodness, and ingenuity of nature; you see amongst us, none but one saved from the Gallows for that purpose, will be a common hangman: we see how ordinary persons they must be that will be perswaded to be Bayliffs; but now to fall upon the Lords Priests is a work only fit for an accursed *Edomite*. The Child of God is yet under a further Law than that of a good nature, he is here taught of God to do good to all, to love his enemies, to do good to them that hate him; to love and pray for those who hate him and despightfully use him; he is so far from requiting *evil* for *evil*, that he taketh himself obliged to return good for evil: Now it is not reasonable to think that God should make use of his own people, who are by himself taught the clean contrary; and are obliged by a contrary law, which they have so far imbibed, that it is written on their hearts, and ingraven in their souls, to punish and chasten his own children. Who ever set a Sheep to worry a Sheep? The work of informing against, accusing, chastening, scourging the people of God, is a work fit for none but profane wretches, drunkards, swearers, the debauchees of the world, who have in them such a radicated hatred of God, and such an antipathy to that holiness which is fountain'd in him; that like as the Basilisk, they say, will fly upon the picture of a man, out of its antipathy to humane nature, they will fly upon every person that hath the image and superscription of God upon his soul, and is called by the holy name of God: it is a work that only fitteth those whose hearts are possessed with the poyson of unrighteousness, and all superfluity of wickedness. To do injury to others, suteth not an ingenious nature in any person; but it much less suteth the Sanctified nature of a Child of God: few creatures will prey upon their own kind. If a Child of God be to be rent and torn in pieces, to be chastened and scourged by men, that he may not be condemned in the world; there are none so fit to do it, as the Dogs and Swine in the world. I would ask of thee (saith an excellent Author) who art under such a temptation as this, Wouldst thou have the Saints of God persecute, imprison, plunder, destroy one another? Surely they would then lose their Majesty of vertue, their title of Saints. Supposing then the work must be done; it is as reasonable to conclude, that it must be done by those who are less righteous then they are;

and not that God ſhould firſt poſſeſs his people with principles and habits of grace diametrically oppoſite to ſuch courſes, and then ſet them on work to practice ſuch things.

2. Give the Lord, I beſeech you, leave *to make ſome uſe of the very worſt of men.* It is the ſaying of an acute Author, *Cur non ex perditis hominibus hoc lucraretur Deus, &c.* Why ſhould not God make this profit of the vileſt men? It is true, it is not all the ſervice which God makes wicked men do; but give me leave to tell you, it is one of the greateſt pieces of ſervice God hath from them; they are left in the Land, as the *Canaanites* were left in *Canaan*, *Judg.* 2. 3, to be *Thorns* in the ſides of Gods *Iſraelites*, to keep the Lords Gaols and Bridewell, his houſes of correction for his people. Take a profane vile wretch, he hath his being from God, and his well-being he hath from God, he eateth Gods bread, and is clothed with Gods wool and flax; What hath God for all this? He ſwears profanely, he blaſphemeth God prodigiouſly, he breaks the Lords Sabbaths, God is diſhonoured by him every day. This ſervice he hath from them, when he hath a Child to be whipped, he turns him over to him; God makes the ſame uſe of wicked men he doth of the *Devils*, they are his peoples *tempters* and *tormentors*. Wicked men are to God, as the Dog to the *Shepherd*, as the *Hawk or Bird of prey to the Faulkener*; God uſeth them, to let them fly at his own people ſometimes, and to pick out the eyes of them who are as dear to him as the Apples of his eye. The *Aſſyrian* in the world ſignifieth little to the ſervice of God, but as as he ſerveth well enough to make a *Rod for his anger*, and a *ſtaff for his indignation*, to be ſent againſt an hypocritical Nation, which God can no longer bear with, but is at laſt reſolved to make the people of his wrath.

3. The worſt of men muſt be ſuffered *to fill up the meaſures of their iniquities*; you know God told *Abraham*, that the iniquity of the *Amorites was not yet full*; God will have ſinners fill up their meaſures. Now, there is no ſuch way for wicked men to fill up the meaſures of their ſins, and make themſelves ripe, full ripe for Divine vengeance, as for them to fall upon this work of devouring the Servants of God, who are more righteous than themſelves are. I have a good authority for it, *Matt.* 23. 34, *Wherefore, behold, I ſend unto you Prophets, and wiſe men, and ſcribes, and ſome of them you ſhall kill and crucifie, and ſome you ſhall ſcourge in your ſynagogues, and perſecute them from city to city,*

city, that upon you may come all the righteous blood that hath been shed upon the Earth, from the blood of Abel, to the blood of Zechariah, &c. Mark what went before, vers. 32. *Fill you up then the measure of your Fathers; you Serpents, you generation of Vipers, how can you escape the damnation of Hell.* As the Child of God must finish his work which God hath given him to do; so the reprobate must fill up his measures too. It may be a poor wretch hath been a swearer, a Sabbath-breaker, a drunkard, an unclean person, many years; God hath born with him, let him alone, there want yet some drops to fill up the measures of his sin, he falls upon the people of God, turns a persecutor, smiteth his fellow-servants with the fist of violence and wickedness; then cometh the master of that servant in an hour when he looketh not for him, and presently giveth him his portion with Hypocrites, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth: offences must come, they will come, but wo be to those by whom they come. Methinks there is a great *Emphasis* in those words, *That upon you may come all the righteous blood that hath been shed upon the earth, from the blood of* Abel, &c. There was a great deal of righteous blood shed from the time of *Abel* to the time of *Zechariah*: what had God let it all sleep? had God in those hundreds of years reckoned with sinners for none of it? Yes, certainly God had revenged himself of many a blood-thirsty man. But yet *Abels* blood was not expiated in Christs time; there was yet an arrear of reckoning for *Abels* blood. Well, who shall pay for it? even every one that was *Cains* successor in that kind of sin. You read no such expression in Holy-writ with reference to any other sin. This sin, this devouring of persons more righteous than our selves, hath many grains of guilt in it more than any other sins have; men by it fill up the measure of the sins of a Nation, and they fill up the measure of their own personal sins. It is a saying (as I remember) of *Augustines*, *Nemo habet injustum lucrum sine justo damno, lucrum habet in arca damnum in conscientia.* "No man getteth any unjust gain without a just loss; "his gain is laid up in his chest, but his loss is in his Conscience; "he gets a penny or two into his purse, but a seal of damnation in "his soul. I am sure all the gains any get by devouring the persons who are more righteous than themselves, is an unjust gain. Yea, though God gives it them, it is unjust gain; God is but permissive in the case, and Gods permission doth not salve them, but that they

they are *possessores malæ fidei.* God gave the *Assyrians*, the *Caldeans*, and other enemies of the *Israelites*, the prey they took from the *Jews*; yet he often calls it by his Prophets, *that which is not theirs*: the loss is in their Consciences, they are hardned to destruction, sealed up to the condemnation of Hell: they fill up the measures of their iniquities by their violence.

4. But lastly, *Why should not God be righteous, in suffering wicked men to do his people good?* This is a point I have something largely before spoken to, and therefore may be shorter in this Discourse: *prosunt & gelu, & nix quia incommodant* (saith one); they do them good, by doing them hurt, as snow and frost do good to the Corn. The Apostle tells the people of God, that *all things are theirs*, 1 Cor. 3. 21. that is, for their good, profit, and advantage; and again, *All things work together for the good of them that love God.* The dignity of the people of God is such, that not only *bruit beasts*, but bruitish men (St. *Pauls Ephesian beasts*) shall be harnessed for their service in order to their eternal salvation; and if the Angels be ministring spirits for the good of Gods elect, it is no wonder if the children of the Devil be beasts ministring for their service too. They say *Vespasian* had a wretched saying, that the *smell of mony was sweet from whencesoever it came.* I am sure the odor of grace is sweet, whatsoever be instrumental for the sending it forth. The truth is, what the wiser Philosophers said of a *morally good* and *wise man*, is much more true of one spiritually wise and good; *He is out of the jurisdiction of evil. Seneca* saith, that a *wise man cannot be contemned of any, quia magnitudinem suam novit, because he knoweth his own riches.* A gracious man can be imprisoned by none, because he knows his own liberty, and will enjoy it when the world hath done what it can: he can be plundred by none, because he knoweth his own riches. It were a vast work to open to you how many wayes the persecutions of the saints advantage and profit the people of God; but I have in some measure done it before, and shall not again further enlarge upon it. The Apostle telleth you much in short, when he telleth you, that *Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.* I shall add no more to the Doctrinal part of this Discourse.

Use 1.

Use 1. Now hear, O *Israel*, hear all you sons and daughters of men, *are not the Lords ways equal?* Is not your judgment of them unequal? This is the great argument against Divine Providence, because in the world there appeareth such a confusion of things, *The wicked walk on every side, while vilest men are exalted:* prophane leud persons, live, grow old, are rich, and great in power. The Sun (which seemeth to go down upon the Tabernacles of some that fear the Lord) shineth bright upon the Tabernacles of the ungodly; the people of God are afflicted, plundred, nay and (which seemeth hardest of all) the holiest and best of men are devoured by the vilest and most prophane wretches; this is that which is a sore temptation to men, and makes them think that certainly there is no God who judgeth the world, or that God regardeth not the affairs of the world; there is no strength in this argument, no reason for such a conclusion: the love or hatred of God is not to be concluded from any thing which is before us in this life, as with reference to actions, we call good evil, and evil good; so through the deceitfulness of our senses, we miscall things; we call those things evil which separate them from the affection of our sense, have no evil in them; and things good which have no real goodness. Now the judgement of sense is a very fallible judgement: do you see the wicked prosper, the godly man visited every morning, and chastned every moment? come but up into the sanctuary, and you will be able to unriddle this Providence: *Job* saw the wicked flourishing and taking root, but suddenly he cursed his habitation. You see the innocent children of God imprisoned, plundred, *&c. Dives clad in purple* and faring deliciously every day, while poor *Lazarus* lies at his door *full of sores*, begging what falleth from his Table, and cannot get any relief. Come up into the Sanctuary, and you shall there see *Lazarus*, this poor begging *Lazarus*, in *Abrahams* bosom, and *Dives* that fared so deliciously, and was so richly clad, begging a cup of cold water to cool his tongue. Had you been with St. *John* in his vision, *Rev.* 7. you would have seen a great number of all nations, kindred and people, standing before the Lamb, and cloathed with white robes, and with Palms in their hands; and these were such as come out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and were in triumph serving God day and night.

* * *Use* 2.

Use 2. What you have heard upon this argument, *looketh very wistly upon every prosperous sinner which this day heareth me, and boasteth in his large possessions of the good things of this life.* The sum of what you have heard is, that the things which you glory in are not truly good; that they are but temporary rewards or gifts of God; that they are means to bring you to the acknowledgement of God; that oft-times through mens corruptions they prove the means of their greater ruine.

1. In the first place, How should this *take down a sinners plumes.* Let not the great man glory in his greatness, nor the rich man in his riches. Let not any say in his heart, if God had not a favour to me, he would never give me such an estate, such a success in my trade, such an healthy body, *&c.* The method of Providence is quite contrary. I have somewhere met with a story, that anciently according to the laws of *Persia*, a malefactor had liberty for an hour before he died to ask what he would, and it was not denied to him. One they say condemned to dye, and being according to their custom askt what he would desire, answers, Neither this nor that, but only *That I may see the Kings face*; which being granted, he so plied the King in that hour, as that he obtained his pardon; whereupon they say that the *Persians* altered their custom, and *covered* the Malefactors face as soon as he was condemned, that he might see the King no more. God to thousands of sinners gives what their hearts could wish, riches, honours, pleasures, they are poor condemned wretches by the law of God for all this, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction; when the hour-glass of their life in this world is run out, they are to be *turned into Hell*, to depart from God as accursed creatures into those everlasting burnings that are prepared for the Devil and his Angels. Only God, that all his creatures might taste something of his bounty, for that hour giveth them all good things of this life; had it not now been a silly and unreasonable thing, suppose the Malefactor had asked for, and had a House full of Gold or Silver, or all the great titles the world could have dignified him with, to have *gloried* and boasted of them as tokens of the Kings love, when in the mean time he knew he was a poor condemned wretch, and by and by to be cut off from the enjoyment of them all. Is not this the very case? thou knowest thy self to be a drunkard, a swearer, a liar, an unclean person; thou knowest

knowest that for these courses the righteous law of a righteous God hath condemned thee; it saith such persons shall never see God, shall never enter into the Kingdom of God, but be thrown into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: God out of his bounty gives thee for the few hours thou hast to live out of Hell, health, riches, honours, pleasures, all thy heart can wish in the world: hast thou any reason to boast thy self in these things, or to be proud of them? thy condition is infinitely worse than the *Philosopher's*, that could eat no dainties at the Kings Table, because he saw a naked sword hang over his head by a twine-thread. Certainly (poor wretch!) it were thy wisdom for this little time of thy life, to do as it is said that Malefactor in *Persia* did, despise all things, and only desire thou mightest apply thy self for the little time of thy life with tears, fasting and prayer to God, that thou mightest see his face, and obtain the pardon of thy sins through the blood of Christ. Poor wretches! what (in the mean time) have you to glory in? what have you to be proud of? What should make you walk with a stretched-out neck, or a lofty eye? thou art not master of one good thing; thou callest them good, because they are grateful to thy sense, and please thy sensitive appetite; and they are so far good as they serve thy outward necessities, but of no significancy at all, either to thy spiritual or eternal happiness. Yet these are the things which make the wicked man proud, swelling in an high opinion of himself, despising others. Oh! that God would make you understand, that you have not only perishing fleshly bodies, to be covered with soft and gay cloathing, but immortal souls; that you are creatures under an ordination to an eternal existence, and that nothing can be worth naming as *good*, but what will profit you as to your immortal capacity, *What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Or what can a man give in exchange or ransome for it. You have heard of a Prince that in his extremity of thirst, cried out, *a Kingdom for a draught of water.* The time will come when every impenitent sinner shall wish that he had not had a foot of land in the world, nor a rag to cover his nakedness, so be it that he had had the pardon of his sins, and the robes of Christs righteousness to cover the nakedness of his soul. Let him therefore that glorieth, glory in this, that God is his Lord, and Jesus Christ is his Saviour.

2. This speaketh to the prosperous sinner, as *not to be high-minded*, because he hath nothing to be proud of; *so to fear*, and to keep, and enjoy what he hath with fear and trembling. *James* would have the *Rich man rejoice when he is brought low*; Jam. 1. 10. *Because as the flower of the grass he passeth away:* and when he hath lost his riches, his honour, his outward felicity, he hath lost all: but here are greater reasons yet, *because by a prosperous condition*, oftentimes, *pœnalis nutritur impunitas*, a penal impunity is nourished. *Prosperity slayeth the fools*, and sinners are ordinarily by it fatted and prepared for the day of slaughter. *David* saw that God set the prosperous sinner in *slippery places:* upon *Pinacles* and *Towers*; but slippery places: you observe that the bloughtiness (as you call it of the body) is but an ill sign of unhealthiness; the sinners growing fat in outward enjoyments, I am sure, is no good sign, Psal. 73. 17, 18, 19. *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castest them down to destruction; how are they brought to destruction in a moment? they are utterly consumed.* If a child of God hath reason to rejoice when he is brought low, surely a sinner hath reason to tremble when he is up on high. Godly men have used to be afraid of prosperity; it is an hard thing for the most watchful Christian to keep his feet, when he is set upon the slippery mountain of riches, honour, successes, *&c.* *David* himself never had a slip like that he had when he came into the highest state. Even the best of Gods people have great reason to rejoice with trembling in the midst of full cups; but sinners have far more reason; when they are not plagued as other men, when there are no bands in their death, when their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart could wish; that is the time when their mouths are *set against Heaven*, then *their day of destruction is not far of*; and indeed those are the two dreadful considerations, and therefore they have reason to fear and tremble. 1. Lest *their prosperity should slay their souls.* There is a latent poyson in sinners hearts at all times, but poverty and adversity keeps it in. *The poor man useth intreaties* (saith *Solomon*), but the rich man speaketh proudly; honour and power are great temptations to *oppression*: Riches and abundance to all sorts of *Luxury.* So as if a man be a *fool*, and hath no spiritual wisdom to rule and to govern himself in a prosperous state; his prosperity slayeth him, giving advantages to those lusts that are in his heart to discover themselves. It is the

prospe-

prosperous sinner that oppresseth his neighbour, that does acts of injustice, and thinks by his power to defend himself. 2. Again, *Prosperity bodes ill*; The sinner is never so near a fall as when he is upon a pinacle of honour and power. When the worldling saith, *Soul take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years*; then comes the voice, *Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be taken from thee*; and one reason of this is because that is the time when his sin ripeneth, when he lifteth up his heart highest, and openeth his mouth widest, and lifteth up his hands most fiercely against the God of Heaven. O then let the prosperous sinner fear and tremble.

3. *Lastly*, You have heard that it is but a righteous thing with God, to give unto the worst of men, the good things of this life, because *they have* something in them of *the nature of means to convince sinners, both of their sins against God, and also of their duty to God:* Indeed, they ordinarily prove the quite contrary, but this is not of themselves, or from their own nature; but from the lust and corruption of sinners hearts. *O then let the goodness of God lead you to repentance*, Rom. 2. 4. The Apostle lets us know, that the patience, long-sufferance, and goodness of God leads us to repentance. The long-suffering and patience of God, if there were no more, ought to do it: And certainly were there any ingenuity in the heart of a sinner, it would do it. For him to sit down and think, I have been a drunkard, a lyar, a swearer, a Sabbath-breaker these Twenty, Thirty, Forty years; God hath seen, and known me all this time, there hath not been a thought of my heart but hath been naked before him; I have not told a lye, nor sworn an oath, but as soon as the word hath been out of my mouth, the news of it hath been in Heaven, and it hath been written in Gods Book of remembrance: God hath all this while been an Almighty God, and hath had it in his power every moment of this time to throw me to Hell. He could have struck me dead with my lye in my mouth, as he did *Ananias* and *Saphira*, Acts 5, or with my oath, my curse, my blasphemy in my mouth; but God hath been long-suffering and patient with me, willing that I should at last be saved: Shall I yet go on in my sinful courses? Shall all this patience of God be lost upon my desperate soul? Surely I am bound humbly to acknowledg thus many years of patience, and to sin no more, lest I turn Divine patience into fury. But then the *riches of Gods goodness*, though

it be but in the things of this life, adds great weight to the argument; for a poor creature to ſit down, and think that he hath not been plagued as other men, he hath not had ſuch a ſickly body, nor ſuch a ſcant eſtate; but God hath made his cup to overflow, he hath had ſucceſs in his trading, whiles others have been blaſted. O ſhall not this goodneſs of God lead thee to an acknowledgment of God? Shall it not lead thee to a repentance for thy ſin? wilt thou treaſure up wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the Revelation of the moſt righteous Judgment of God? Conſider that *the good things thou haſt enjoyed*, have a natural tendency to change thee, if thou hadſt not baniſhed that common ingenuity which teacheth all to love thoſe that love them; and moſt certainly it will make thee worſe, if not better: if it doth not ſoften thy heart, it will harden thy heart; if theſe things tend not to make thee more holy, they will certainly make thee more leud and profane. And think with thy ſelf what an aggravation of thy eternal miſery it will be, to fall into it, out of as high a ſtate of content and external felicity as thou wert capable of. I would have every proſperous ſinner ſay with himſelf, *What hath God done to me* that I ſhould be thus vile, and ſo preſumptuouſly ſin againſt him? There are very many, that if they would liſten a little to their own conſciences, might hear God by them, ſpeaking to them, and ſaying, *What could God have done more for you than he hath done?* Would you have ſtrong and healthy bodies? God hath given you them. Would you have large poſſeſſions? great and plentiful eſtates? God hath given you ſuch. Would you have deſired a loving Wife, hopeful Children? You have had them. God aggravateth the ſin of *David* from the outward bleſſings he had bleſſed him with; he had raiſed him to be King over *Iſrael* from following the ſheep; he had given him his Maſters Houſes, and his Maſters Wives into his boſom, 1 *Sam.* 11. Will not God, think you, from hence aggravate your ſins another day? Will not this make Hell twice more Hell to you? will it not add more heat to the fire that never ſhall go out? and pain to the gnawings of that worm that ſhall never dye? Oh harden not your hearts; to day, while it is called to day hearken to God ſpeaking to you, not only by the voice of his Word, but by the voice of his Mercies. O let not that riches of Divine goodneſs make you worſe, which in reaſon ought to make you better. Let not your honours, your riches damn you.

Take

Take heed that there be not cauſe to ſay of you, that if God had not been ſo good to you, you had not been ſo leud and profane, ſo wicked and abominable in his ſight. Thus far I have applied this diſcourſe, as to wicked men; it remaineth yet, that I ſhould apply it as to the people of God, ſhewing them their duty under ſuch diſpenſations of providence; but it is a point fit in our times to be further enlarged upon, than my time will now allow me to do.

SERMON XLV.

Pſal. 37. *v.* 1, 3, 4, 5, 7.

Fret not thy ſelf becauſe of evil-doers; neither be thou envious at the workers of iniquity. Verſ. 3. *Truſt in the Lord, and do good.* Verſ. 4. *Delight thy ſelf alſo in the Lord.* Verſ. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord, truſt alſo in him.* Verſ. 7. *Reſt in the Lord, wait patiently for him.* Verſ. 8. *Ceaſe from anger, and forſake wrath; fret not thy ſelf in any wiſe to do evil.*

THe point I am upon, is to clear up the juſtice, equity, and reaſonableneſs of the motions of Gods Actual Providence, in the proſperity of wicked men, his afflictings and chaſtiſeings of his own people, and delivering them up into the hands of thoſe, who although the beſt of Gods People are ſinners, and deſerve the ſeverities of God, yet are more wicked, more unrighteous than they. This I have cleared, and made Application of my diſcourſe, ſo far as may concern wicked men; That which only yet remains, is to inform the People of God of their duty under ſuch a diſpenſation: This has been the caſe of God's people in former times; the eſtates at leaſt of many who truly fear God, and deſire to worſhip him according to his Will, have been expoſed to the vileſt men; and this may be a ſore temptation

to Gods own people. I will therefore enlarge this discourse a little, shewing you *the duty* of Gods People at such a time, and for this I have chosen this Text. No other portion of Scripture so fully setting it out together, as the 7 or 8 first verses of this *Psalm*, which partly shew them.

1. *What they are to avoid.* 2. And then *what they are to do.*

The prohibitive directions are three. 1. *They must not fret*, this is repeated three times, *v.* 1. *Fret not thy self because of evil doers.* v. 7. *Fret not thy self because of him that prospereth in his way, because of the man that bringeth wicked devices, to pass*, v. 8. *Fret not thy self in any wise to do evil.*

2. They must not be *envious.* v. 1. *Neither be thou envious at the workers of iniquity.* 3. They must not be angry. *v.* 8. *Cease from anger, forsake wrath.* The instructive directions are four.

The first is the *exercise of faith.* v. 3. *Trust in the Lord.* v. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord*, trust in him. *v.* 7. *Rest on the Lord.*

2. The second is the practice of holiness. 1. They must not do evil. *v.* 8. so *v.* 27. They must depart from evil. 2. They *must do good.* v. 3. v. 27. The same is repeated.

3. The third is, They must *delight themselves in the Lord.* v. 4. *Delight thy self also in the Lord.*

4. They *must wait patiently for God*, v. 7. You have it again repeated. *v.* 34. *Wait patiently for him. Wait on the Lord and keep his way.*

In these 6 or 7 particulars I shall open to you, and press upon you your duty under such dispensations as these. I will put the three first together, because they have a great affinity, and cognation one with another.

1. It is your duty under such a dispensation, *Not to fret, to be envious or angry.* The words in the *Hebrew* Text are חרר קנה חרה wch signifie to inflame, to kindle, to burn, and in a secondary sense to be *angry*, because anger puts a man into an heat; the heating of the blood about the heart by the disorder and disturbance of the gall, is assigned as the natural cause of it. The moral Philosopher, calleth Anger the irrational perturbation of the mind: others tell us it is a desire of Revenge, and use to distinguish betwixt *ira* and *iracundia*, making the first to be where we have a just cause, the other

other where there is no cauſe; but in ſhort, as to our purpoſe, anger is to be conſidered,

1. As *a paſſion*, a natural paſſion; and ſo is not in it ſelf ſinful, it is a power created in us by God, which we may uſe well or ill.

2. As a *Vertue* when it is uſed in a good and juſtifiable cauſe when a man is troubled and deſireth the puniſhment of another *ſecundum ordinem rationis*, where according to Gods will he ought to be puniſhed.

3. As a *Vice*, ſuch the exerciſe of this paſſion proveth, *when a man is angry either for no juſt cauſe*, or *in an irrational and undue manner*. When wicked men proſper we are commanded not to be angry, not to fret wickedly and ſinfully, ſo as either to be *diſpleaſed at Gods Providence*, as *Jonah* was for the gourd, when God asking him if he *did well to be angry*, plainly implieth that he did ill and not well; or to deſire an *unjuſt*, and *undue revenge upon him*, either when the perſon hath not deſerved it, or in an undue order or meaſure. This *Anger* firſt boileth in the heart, and there diſcovereth it ſelf in evil wiſhes, and thoughts of ſinful revenge; then breaketh out at the lips, and ſheweth it ſelf in uncomely ſpeeches, reproaches, and revilings; and laſtly ſheweth it ſelf in rendring evil for evil. The anger which is here forbidden us under this diſpenſation of God is ſuch as tendeth to the *diſhonor of God*, to the diſturbance of our own Spirits, wiling them, and putting them into diſorder; and to the unjuſt diſturbance of others. From this anger it is the will of God that his people under ſuch diſpenſations ſhould ceaſe. This is the *wrath* they ſhould forſake.

The word tranſlated [*envy*] ſignifieth to *envy* or emulate. *Envy* is properly an hatred of or a trouble for the felicity of another, whether the cauſe of it be a fear of ſome hurt to our ſelves, or a diſcontent that it is well with them, or that they are in a better eſtate than our ſelves. Hence is hatred, detraction, rejoicing in the evil of our neighbour, Affliction at their proſperity, *&c.* There is a juſt anger at the proſperity of wicked men as, God is diſhonoured by reaſon of it, and the intereſt of God in the world ſuffereth by it; for the heart of a man to be hot and zealous for God, yea and to deſire Gods juſt revenge of his own name and glory upon ſinners, is but what he may and ought to crave and do. Thus we find *Moſes*, the meekeſt men on the Earth often angry,

angry, and executing the vengeance upon God but for a man to be displeased and discontented at Gods Providence for it, or to be angry at their Bretherns good, this is sinful, the first is against the *love* which *we owe to God*, the second against *the love which we owe unto our Neighbour*. To desire an undue or unjust punishment of them, is a sin against Justice, that Justice which we owe unto all men; this envying at the prosperity of sinners, is forbidden also in other Texts. *Prov.* 3.31. *Envy not thou the oppressor, chuse none of his ways*, Prov.24.1. *Be not envious as the evil doers, neither desire thou to be with them.* In sum, God in this precept, forbiddeth his people under such dispensations: all discontentment at their own low estate, all displeasure at Gods dealings with others, all accusations of God of injustice or hard dealings with his people whatsoever, as a fruit, or indication of any of those passions, is certainly here forbidden us, under the notions of fretting, being angry, or envious. Let me now press this negative or prohibitive part of your duty upon you by some few arguments.

1. I beseech you to consider the *exceeding sinfulness of it*: when God said to the Prophet *Jonah. Dost thou well to be angry*, it is certainly implyed that he did not well. It is in this *Psalm* twice forbidden us, twice in the Book of *Proverbs*, at least. *Envy* is by the Apostle reckoned up as one of the *fruits of the flesh*; now certainly if no more could be said than this; It is the will of God, that if thou seest the wicked prosper, grow rich, and great, thou shouldst not be displeased at God, nor envy them, *&c.* This should be enough to engage the people of God to take heed to their Spirits in this thing; and indeed we had need watch, for we shall find our Souls under very great temptations in the case, and that it is a very hard thing for a good man to look with a good Eye upon the prosperity of wicked men.

2. But I shall shew you, that it is a sin which receiveth more than ordinary aggravations. 1. As first, *it is against the express letter of the Divine Law*, 1 *Kings* 11. 9, 10. It is said, *that the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing that he should not go after other Gods.* God hath commanded us *concerning* this thing, this particular thing, and hath been pleased to make it the matter of a precept many times repeated. If God had commanded us some great thing,

should

ſhould we not have obeyed him in it? How much more in the forbearing of a little luſt, or paſſion! It is not concluded a ſin, meerly from conſequence of Scripture, or to be concluded from ſome precepts that are laid down there, it is the expreſs letter of Scripture, he that runs may read the will of God concerning this.

2. Again, by how much the more precepts are violated by any ſinful action, by ſo much the ſin is greater: you have heard this is a Sin againſt both Tables; a ſin againſt the duty which we owe unto God, and the duty which we owe to our Neighbour; that which we are forbidden in many Scriptures, thoſe ſo plain that he who runs may read them.

3. Again, *Some ſins are in their own nature more heinous than others, amongſt others the ſin of Murther is a very great tranſgreſſion. Solomon* ſaith, *Prov.* 6.32. *Men do not deſpiſe a thief if he ſtealeth to ſatisfy his Soul when he is hungry*, but, *v.* 32. *whoſo committeth adultery with a woman lacketh underſtanding*, he doth injury to his neighbour of an higher nature. But now *Murther* that is an higher tranſgreſſion; St. *John* tells us *no Murtherer hath eternal life.* Our Saviour reduceth *Anger* and *Envy* under the commandment, *Thou ſhalt not kill*; and makes him that is angry with his Brother without a cauſe no leſs than a Murtherer.

4. Further yet, *a ſin that breaketh out at the lips in ſinful words, or in the converſation by irregular actions, is greater, than that which is only in the heart defiling that*; Now it is a very hard thing for men to keep the fire of anger and envy within the chimney of their corrupt hearts: Even the beſt men have not been able to keep it in.

5. *Finally by how much any ſin is more the mother of Sin, and brings forth more ſins, by ſo much the greater it is.* This fretting, and envying at the proſperity of ſinners, beſides the diſcontent, and impatience of the Spirit which conſtantly attendeth it, bringeth forth a world of ſin at our lips, and in our converſation, reviling ſpeeches, detracting words, ſpightful thoughts, words and actions, *&c.*

2. Again, this ſin receiveth an aggravation from the *perſons offending.* In that Text, 1 *Kings* 11.4, 9. I obſerve two aggravations of *Solomons ſin of Apoſtacy.* The firſt, that he did it *when he was old*, ſo had he great experiences of God. *v.* 9. there's another expreſſion, it was after *God had appeared to him twice*: for men

that know not God, nor have had any experience of his ways, to fret and vex that others have more of the world than they have, is not such a guilt as for the people of God to do it. They are called the *Children of Light*, and that not only in respect of grace, and mercy, which may be compared to light of which they are Children, but with respect to knowledg; they are a people who know better things than others and should know the riches, the honours all the good things of the world are not worth valuing, now for you after that you have been thus far enlightened, still to be so enamoured upon them as to *fret*, *vex*, and be *envious*, because others have more of them than you have; must be a great transgression; Especially to consider that you are the Children of God, heirs of grace, yea and of glory too. Thus I remember the Father of the Prodigal, rebuked his Son fretting for the fatted Calf slain for his Brother; Son (saith he,) remember thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine, for those whom God hath made the heirs of grace and glory, the heirs of the Kingdom, to whom God hath said *All that I have is thine*. I say for these to fret, vex and repine that wicked men prosper in this world, and have a little of this worlds goods, must be a great provocation. And to this, there are not many of Gods people but in one degree or other, have had an experience of the incertainty, and vanity of all these things, enough to depretiate them, and render them invaluable to any good and gracious heart.

Further yet, what doth any man get by *fretting*, *vexing*, or being *envious* at the *prosperity of sinners*? as our Saviour said of thought-fulness, none can by thinking add one cubit to his stature. So I may say, none by fretting, vexing, or envy, can either detract a cubit from the stature of a sinner in prosperity, nor add a cubit to his own, it is a sin, that can end in nothing but murmurings and repinings against God, in tormenting and macerating of our selves, and in the discomposure of our Spirits. To shut up this discourse *by how much any sin is more causeless*, by so much the greater it is, there is neither so much good in the highest prosperity a sinner is capable of, nor so much evil in the lowest and most afflicted estate of the people of God, as to give a reasonable ground or occasion for a Child of God, to give himself the disturbance so much as of one hour, or to wile his Spirit, for—*tolluntur in altum, ut lapsu graviore ruant*, they are set in slippery places, they are mounted up to Heaven, but they shall be thrown down to Hell. It will be a great piece of a sinners infelicity

licity in Hell, that he hath had an external felicity upon earth. But I have shewed you this largely in the opening of the Doctrine. This is enough to have spoken to the first thing in a Christians duty under such a dispensation.

2. I proceed to a second thing, wherein the duty of a child of God lieth under such a dispensation of Providence, as I have been discoursing of; *That is, living a life of faith.* This is called *Trusting in the Lord*, vers. 3. *Committing our way unto the Lord*, vers. 5. *Resting on the Lord*, vers. 7. *Trust in the Lord*, vers. 3. and *verily thou shalt be fed:* it may be read, and is read by some, *Feed upon truth:* the words are ורעה אמונה The Psalmist useth three or four words here expressive of this Duty בטח, which some translate *hope*; so the *LXX* ἐλπισον. ורעה that all translate *feed*, גול *devolve:* it is also translated *dirige, detege, confide*; the last word is יתחולל, which some translate *expect*; some, *beg* or *desire.* The first word is used *vers.* 3. which, as I told you, some translate *hope*, some translate *trust*; there is no great difference, for all hope doth imply trusting; and no man trusteth but he will hope. I will turn you to some other texts where the same word is used, Psal. 25. 2 *O my God, I will trust in thee, let me not be ashamed.* Prov. 28. 26. *He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.* Jer. 7. 8. *Behold you trust in lying words, that will not profit.* Psal. 118. *It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man.* In short, it signifieth to repose a confidence in another for the effecting of something for our advantage; from which act of the mind proceedeth another, which is *hoping*, which is the souls motion in expectation of a thing. The second expression, as we translate it, is *verily thou shalt be fed*, as others feed on truth. It is the word that is ordinarily used in Scripture, and translated *truth*: the word translated *feed*, is also what is ordinarily so translated; those that translate it *verily*, take it adverbially: but how ורעה is translated *thou shalt be fed*, I do not understand, and therefore prefer the other reading of some learned men; and *feed upon truth*: so truth is the object, and *feeding* signifies the act. And thus it beareth a proportion to that Text, Hab. 2. 4. *The just shall live by faith*; wicked men *feed upon the wind*, Hos. 12. 1. upon *Ashes*, Isaiah 44. 20. But (saith the Psalmist) *feed thou upon truth*, the truth of Gods word. It may be thou canst not feed upon bread, thou hastest not that to eat; but if thou canst not feed upon bread, feed upon the promises, *feed upon truth, O doctrinam auream* (saith a grave Author) *debere o[illegible]stram*

Alimoniam, omnem vitam in hac terra conjunctam habere fidem, O golden ſentence, that all our livelihood in this world is faith. A third expreſſion is, *Commit thy way unto the Lord*; *Ar. Montanus* tranſlateth it *roul*, the *Arabick verſion*, *diſcover thy way unto the Lord:* the word is uſed *Gen.* 29. 38. and *they ſhall roul the ſtone.* Prov. 26. 27. *He that rouleth a ſtone* it ſhall return upon him. The fourth time is דום, we tranſlate it *reſt in the Lord*, others, be *ſilent to the Lord*; So *Lam.* 3. 26. It is good that a man ſhould both hope and *quietly wait.* I ſhall not much inſiſt on that word: there is a double reſt, 1. *A reſt of confidence.* 2. *A reſt of ſilence*; of which more when I come to ſpeak of the duty of patience under this diſpenſation. You have heard the words expreſſive of the Act; there are two words in theſe verſes, that expreſs the object of this Act; *Truth*, *The Lord Jehovah.* God is the *objectum quod:* Jer. 17. 3, 4. *Curſed be he that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm.* God is the object which the ſoul is to truſt in. The word of truth is the next object, the object by and through which, and upon the account and incouragement of which, we truſt in God at ſuch a time. The object of faith is the *truth*, *power* and *goodneſs* of God revealed to the child of God in the word. There are uſually mentioned two *acts of faith.* The firſt is called *Aſſent*, by which the ſoul agreeeth to the *Propoſition* of the word, as a *true ſaying.* The ſecond is an *Act of recumbency*, a reſting upon the promiſe, a reſting upon Gods truth, power and goodneſs, as declared and held forth in his word. This is that which prophane perſons in our age (to ſhew their Atheiſm as well as wit) call a lolling upon Chriſt and his promiſe. Rolling our ſelves and reſting upon *Jehovah*, and upon the *word of truth*, are (as you ſee) Scripture-terms of which we need not be aſhamed. Hence if you ask me, what it is for the ſoul of a Chriſtian to live *by faith* in an evil time. I anſwer it lyeth in two things.

1. *In the ſouls fixed and ſteady aſſent unto thoſe Promiſes which God hath made to his People, ſuted to ſuch a diſpenſation.* Theſe are many and more than one ſort: they are written in the Scripture, and brought to our minds by reading and by hearing the word of God: the buſineſs of faith is to unite the ſoul to theſe words, and to command the ſoul into a fixed and ſteady aſſent to them, that the ſoul ſhall no more doubt of the fulfilling them, than of any thing of more ſenſible demonſtration. Theſe Promiſes might

might be brought under ſeveral heads: I intend not to inlarge this diſcourſe ſo far as to treat of all. I ſhall only inſtance in two ſorts, and ſpeak ſomething to them.

1. The firſt is thoſe promiſes which God hath made *for the deſtruction of wicked men, though ſet upon the higheſt pinacle of honour, power and proſperity:* of which you have divers in this very Pſalm, verſ. 2. *For they ſhall ſoon be cut down like the graſs, and wither like the green herb:* verſ. 9. *For evil doers ſhall be cut off:* verſ. 10. *Yet a little while and the wicked ſhall not be: yea thou ſhalt diligently conſider his place, and it ſhall not be.* So verſ. 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 28, 38. Pſal. 1. 4. *They ſhall be as the chaff, which the wind bloweth to and fro.* The Scripture is full of ſuch words as theſe.

2. The ſecond ſort are *thoſe Promiſes which God hath made for the protection and preſervation of his people, under the preſſures of ungodly men.* Pſal. 125. 3. *The rod of the wicked ſhall not reſt upon the lot of the righteous.* Pſal. 46. 5. *God is in the midſt of his Church, therefore it ſhall not fall.* Mat. 16. 18. *The gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* Pſal. 94. 14. *For the Lord will not caſt off his people, neither will he forſake his inheritance.* Mica. 4. 4, 11, 12. So quite through this Pſalm there are many promiſes of the ſame import. Now the work of faith is to perſwade the ſoul, of the certainty, and undoubted verity of theſe words of God, to ſettle the ſoul in this perſwaſion, That ſooner ſhall Heaven and earth paſs away, than any of theſe things ſhall fail which God hath ſpoken. Then the work of faith is further to carry out the ſoul without any carping, trouble or diſputing, to reſt wholly upon theſe words. A Chriſtian ſeeth the word of God what he hath ſaid for its relief: now faith teacheth the ſoul to agree this as the word of him *who cannot lye or repent:* and calleth upon the ſoul to truſt in God for the fulfilling of it, to roll it ſelf upon the promiſe, and to commit it ſelf, its cauſe, its way unto the Lord: the ſoul of a Chriſtian is very ſolicitous and careful for the concern and intereſt of God in the world: faith teacheth the ſoul to caſt its care, the burthen of its ſpirit upon the Lord, aſſuring it that God careth for it. Faith ſpeaketh to the ſoul in the language of *Solomon*, Eccleſ. 5. 8. *If thou ſeeſt the oppreſſion of the poor, and violent perverting of Juſtice, and Judgment in a Province; marvel not at the matter, for he that is higher than the higheſt regardeth, and there be higher than they.* I ſay, this is a great piece of the Child of Gods duty in ſuch a time when the

the vileſt men are exalted, and the wicked walk on every ſide, and the people of God are troden under foot, as the mire in the ſtreets. It is the Will of God concerning them, *The juſt ſhall live by faith.* This is the proper time for the exerciſe of Faith, when the eye of ſenſe faileth; Faith is the evidence of things not ſeen, the ſubſtance of things hoped for: The proper operation of Faith is, where ſenſe faileth, where God is truſted, and not ſeen: *Bleſſed are they,* (ſaith our Saviour) *who have not ſeen, and yet believe.* This is *Opus diei in die ſuo.* Though the people of God ought to be careful of all duty at all times, yet they ought to have a ſpecial regard to the duty of their day; the ſeaſonableneſs of a duty, addeth much to the weight and importance of it. *The foundations are ſhaken* (ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*) *Pſal.* 11. 3, 4, *What ſhall, what can the righteous do?* Mark what follows: *The Lords Throne is in Heaven, his eyes ſee, his eye-lids try the children of men.* This is that life which the Saints have lived, yea, and they have lived well upon it. When *David* had loſt all, the *Amalekites* had taken *Ziglag*, and in it all that he had, 1 *Sam.* 30. 6, the Text ſaith, *David encouraged himſelf in God*, the Truth, Power, and Goodneſs of God; nor did he hope in God in vain, as you ſhall read in that ſtory. What had *Hezekiah* to live upon but Faith, when *Sennacherib* had beſieged him with his mighty Army, and ranted againſt him, and the God of Heaven too after that rate you read. What had all the Patriarchs, all the Saints and Servants of God to live upon but Faith? of whom you read, *Heb.* 11. Nor is there any life which ſo glorifieth God as this; it eminently glorifieth three Attributes of his, his *Power, Goodneſs and Truth.* No man will truſt in a bruiſed Reed, or lean upon a broken Staff; therefore the Apoſtle ſpeaking of *Abrahams* faith, *Heb.* 11. ſaith, *He believed that God was able to raiſe him from the dead:* and again, *Rom.* 3, *He believed that he who promiſed was able to perform.* It giveth God the glory of his *goodneſs*, for the expectation of his ſoul, is the Mercy and Goodneſs of God; and it alſo giveth God the glory of his truth, for the proximate object of Faith, is the Word, and Promiſe of God. O therefore let this be your care, when you cannot live by ſenſe, live by Faith. It is the happineſs of a Child of God, he hath ſomething to live on in the worſt of times, *Pſal.* 34. 10, *The young Lions ſhall be hunger-bit; but there is no want to them that fear the Lord.* One would think that of all creatures the Lion ſhould be moſt out of danger of being hunger-bit. The Lion

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the King of the Foreſt, all other Beaſts are ſubject to this Beaſt: yet if an old Lion, that cannot run for its prey, that hath loſt much of its ſtrength may be hunger-bitten; one would think a *young-Lion* that is in its full ſtrength ſhould not. Yes, ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, a *young Lion* may be hunger-bitten: thoſe that have moſt of the world, wicked men that have greateſt honours, greateſt power, great advantages to provide for themſelves, they may be hunger-bitten, they may come to want; but there ſhall be no want to them who fear the Lord, there ſhall be no time ſo ill, but they ſhall live; if they cannot live upon bread, they ſhall feed upon truth. How much better is the eſtate of a godly man, than that of his neighbour? It is a great point this, a great piece of duty: Let me therefore a little further enlarge upon it three ways; 1. Shewing you how a Chriſtian may know if he liveth this life. 2. Directing you in order to it. 3. Perſwading it by Arguments.

1. Will ſome Chriſtian ſay, how ſhall I know if I live this life? Suffer me to give you five or Six Characters of it. 1. It is a *Spiritual life*. *Our life* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *is hid with Chriſt in God*. What Chriſt ſometimes ſaid to his Diſciples when they would have had him to have eaten ſomething, that a Child of God may ſay to all the world; *I have meat to eat you know not of*. His life is a ſpiritual life; ſuch is the life of Faith, both with reſpect to the ſubject, and to the object of it. As to the *ſubject* of it, it is the ſoul that lives; the *body lives by bread*, the ſoul lives *by truth*, by the *promiſe*. There are many that in evil days, their bodies have enough to feed upon, but their ſouls have nothing; hence their hearts become like *Nabals*, dead as a ſtone: yea, and as to the object *it is ſpiritual* too, he that feedeth upon *truth*, feedeth upon *Jehovah*: It is the truth of God in the word, which the ſoul liveth upon; the ſoul of a Believer can no more live upon Words and Syllables, than another ſoul. No but it is the truth of God in theſe words, his power and ability to perform what he hath ſaid, his inclination and good-will to the performance, and his truth and faithfulneſs. Every life in an evil day, is not a life of faith; ſome may live upon fancy and fooliſh hope, ſome may live upon means, with which their eye feedeth them; another may live upon a *Roman* ſpirit of his own. *Tu ne cede malis, ſed contra audentior ito*. Theſe men may live at Sea, in the midſt of troubles, and never think of God and Chriſt, nor upon the power, goodneſs, and truth of God, but upon an,

O socii neque enim ignari sumus ante malorum,
O passi graviora, &c.

or some such thing; but this is not to live upon faith, if thy soul liveth the life of faith, thy heart is alive in an evil time; and the life and courage of it is maintained from God, thy heart is maintained from the Truth, Power, and Goodness of God.

2. This life of Faith is a *quiet life*: It is a quiet life *as to passions*. Faith hath a wonderful power, to keep the mind in a calm serene temper: It is the unbelieving soul that fretteth, and fumeth, and vexeth; all turbulent passions upon Gods providence are the products of unbelief. The Prophet telleth us, *He that believeth maketh not haste*: Faith dryeth up immoderate tears, scatters the storms of fears, maketh the soul to cease from anger, and forsake wrath: It quieteth the tongue, so as it doth not charge God foolishly; it keeps a man from all murmuring and flyings out against God, from all indecent and extravagant flying out against men, who are Gods instruments; *I held my peace, because I knew it was thy doing*. *David* believed that God had done what was done, he dust not mutter or repine, because the Lord had done it. And so as to action, I mean irregular actions, Take an unbeliever, and let him be in any streight or distress, he is unquiet, and turbulent, and makes no conscience what means he useth to set himself at liberty; but *he that believeth maketh not haste*, he who by faith eyeth the promise, gives credit to it, and hath committed himself to the Power, Goodness, and Truth of God for the accomplishment of it: as he is not *hasty* with his spirit, to murmur, fret, and vex, because it is not presently made good to him; so he is not hasty with his tongue to charge God foolishly, nor in his action: He dareth not use any sinister or unlawful means, to quit himself of any difficulty in which he is entangled; he believeth that God will preserve, uphold, deliver him, and in his own time find out some lawful way and means, and the belief of this restraineth him from impatience, or any thing which should be a fruit, and indication of it.

28:Isa:16.

3. Again, *The life of Faith*, is an *expectant life*. The Apostle telleth us, that *Faith is the evidence of things not seen*: Hence Faith hath always two daughters which are its genuine off spring. 1. *Hope*, which is the souls *looking up*, or *looking out* for those things of which Faith giveth an evidence or assurance. *Faith* assureth, hope expecteth, and this is so inseparable from *Faith*, that it is often in Scripture put for Faith, and only differeth in this,

this, that Hope is an *expectancy* upon faith's evidence; and the certainty which it giveth the soul of the thing promised in the word. Every hope indeed doth not speak faith, but every grounded hope doth; there is an hope of an hypocrite which groweth up *like the rush without mire, and the flag without water*. *Patience* is another daughter of Faith (I shall have occasion to speak to that more fully hereafter). *Faith* assureth the thing to the soul, *Hope* looketh out for it, and expects it; *Patience* keeps the soul still, and waiting for it: If you ask me what the soul expecteth, what it waiteth for; it must needs be that, of which Faith hath given the soul an evidence, that is the Promise. The Promises are of various natures, for outward mercies, such as *Protection, Deliverance*, &c. Spiritual mercies, such as inward *Support, Strength, Consolations, Eternal happiness*.

4 Again, *The life of Faith is an active life:* The operation of Faith doth not terminate in a meer speculation. The activity of Faith lieth,

1. *In the diligent use of all natural and rational means which God hath appointed, in order to the obtaining of the mercy, of which faith hath given the soul an evidence and assurance.* As Faith doth quiet the soul, and restrain it from the use of all unlawful means; so it doth quicken and engage the soul in the use of all lawful and proper means. The reason of which is, because Faith can assure the soul of no mercy, but in that manner and order, and under those circumstances, in, and under which, God hath promised to bestow it. Now God hath promised mercies in the use of means; so it quickeneth and engageth the soul to the use of means, as a piece of the Will of God, in order to the obtaining of our desired mercy.

2. It lyeth in the use of all *spiritual means*; and here *Prayer* in a special manner, *Prayer* being the general spiritual means to be used for the obtaining of any mercy. *Daniel, chap. 9, understood by Books*, that the time was come, for the fulfilling of the 70 years captivity; and this faith of his, as to what he read in the Books, quickned him up, to pour out that fervent prayer unto God, *Dan. 9.*

5. The life of Faith is *a cheerful* and *joyous life:* you read in Scripture of a joy and peace which attendeth believing, *Rom. 15. Believing the glory of God*, is a great means to make the soul to rejoyce in the hopes of it: Now the reason of this joy, is the strength of that evidence which faith doth give the soul; for joy is nothing else but the complacency of the soul, or rather the expression of this complacency, upon the souls union to its desired object. Now according to the *nearness* and *fulness* of this union, so is the joy.

Faith giving the ſoul a great and unqueſtionable evidence of the thing, doth alſo give unto the ſoul a proportionable joy.

6. The life of Faith is *a crucifying, dying life to the world. This is the victory* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *by which we overcome the world, even our faith.* Faith looketh up to the *Croſs of Chriſt*, and by it, the heart of a Chriſtian is crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to his heart. The proper operation of Faith is to work againſt hope; for indeed, if once the mercy cometh in ſight, ſo as ſenſe cometh in play, *faith ceaſeth* as well as *hope*: Hence the operation, and exerciſe of Faith, muſt needs crucifie the heart of a Chriſtian, to the world, to ſenſe, and to all *ſenſible objects*. Faith made *Abraham* overlook *his own body, which was now dead*, and *Sarahs dead womb*; it made him to overlook the *Knife* and the *Altar*, and the loſs of *Iſaac's* natural life, and only to conſider, that *God was able to raiſe him up from the dead*; it maketh a Chriſtian overlook all ſeeming difficulties, in regard of ſenſe, and all contrarieties whatſoever indeed ſeemeth to be in his way: Now by theſe things, you may try your ſelves whether you live the life of Faith, under ſad and dark Providences, yea, or no. By this time methinks I hear ſome of you ſaying to me, But how ſhould we come to live this life? what ſhould we do, that in dark and troubleſom times we might live this life of Faith? Let me give you ſomething of advice in the caſe, and then conclude with two or three Arguments.

1. *Study the Scriptures*, and obſerve the promiſes repoſited in that ſtorehouſe for the people of God at all times, and for all ſorts of mercies. The promiſes are thoſe words by which men live, The Scripture is a rich Store-houſe of mercy, it is full of promiſes, promiſes for this life, and that which is to come; there is in them a *ſalve* for every ſore, and this is well worth a Chriſtians obſervation, to ſee how God in his word hath fitted him with a plaiſter for every wound; when thou findeſt the promiſes reſpecting thy ſtate in particular, indeavour to whet them upon thy heart. It is a metaphor which God uſeth as to his precepts, *Deut.* 6. and as it is the duty of a Child of God to *whet* the Precepts upon his heart, to engage, and quicken him to obedience: ſo it is his duty to whet the promiſes upon his ſoul for his conſolation. The Scripture is full of comfortable words; O be not ignorant of them! it is a large and full ſtore-houſe, O be acquainted with it!

2. *Learn to live upon God in proſperity and fulneſs.* The Soul that maketh the Lord its portion in a time of proſperity and fulneſs, will ſcarce be to ſeek in a day of emptineſs and adverſity. Our too much living upon the creature, while we have it: will hinder our wholly

wholly living upon God when we want it. Take heed of living too much upon your creature-enjoyments when you have them, learn in the greateſt affluence of the creatures, in the greateſt overflowings of your cup, to live upon God, and to ſay of them, *This is not my portion.* Saint *Paul* had his heart crucified to the world, and dyed daily. O how hard doth the Soul find it to live upon God in an evil time; that hath not learned to live upon God in a good day? and while it goeth well with him as to outward enjoyments. You that are at eaſe in the world, and do not know the evil that others meet with; learn this leſſon before the evil day cometh upon you, and ſurpriſeth you. Learn to live upon God, before you have nothing elſe but a God to encourage your ſelf in.

3. *Obſerve the practice and experience of the Saints of God. David* lived by faith, when he had nothing in the world left him, he encouraged himſelf in his God; *Job* lived *by faith* when he ſaid. *Though he kills me, yet I will put my truſt in him.* Say to your Soul, *my Soul, why ſhould not I go, and do likewiſe.* Why ſhould I not do as *David* and *Job* did, I have the ſame promiſe, the ſame power, truth, and goodneſs of God to truſt to, and to live upon which any of the Servants of God have formerly had.

4. *Call thy heart off its diſquietments*, indeavour to convince thy ſelf of the ſinfulneſs of them: there is much in this as to one that is a true Chriſtian; if one that is a Child of God can effectually perſwade himſelf that it is his ſin to have his heart dead in an evil day, to have his heart dejected becauſe the Providence of God bloweth a croſs upon him, it will go a great way with him to command his heart off its diſturbance. Thus doth *David*, Pſal. 42. 11. *why art thou caſt down, O my Soul, why art thou diſquieted within me truſt ſtill in God, for I ſhall yet praiſe him who is the health of my countenance and my God.*

5. Laſtly, ſtrengthen your hearts with a reſolution *to truſt in God; though he killeth me*, ſaith *Job*, *I will put my truſt in him.* See what *David* doth *Pſal.* 55. He had been bitterly complaining of the proſperity of the wicked, and his own afflicted ſtate; in the cloſe of the *Pſalm* he cometh to give both himſelf and others good counſel. *v* 22. 23. *Caſt thy burthen upon the Lord, he ſhall ſuſtain thee, he ſhall never ſuffer the righteous to be moved. But thou, O God ſhalt bring them down into the Pit of deſtruction; bloody, and deceitful men, ſhall not live out half their days, but I will truſt in thee.* I have done with this diſcourſe when I have commended this life of faith to you by two or three arguments.

1. It is a *life in death*, light in darkneſs, ſtrength in weakneſs, comfort

comfort in misery: the Soul that can live this life is a great conquerour over *tribulation*, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril Sword; yea it is more than a Conquerour, *Rom.* 8. 35. You shall see how it is with a Christian which hath learned to live the life of faith, 2 *Cor.* 8. 9. he may be *troubled on every side, but he will not be distressed*, he may *be perplexed, but he will not be in despair*, he may be *persecuted* but he will *not be forsaken, cast down, but he will not be destroyed*; is not this a rare life? A persecutor may take away the life of nature from a Christian, but he cannot deprive him of his life of faith; faith will keep the head of a Christian above water in the greatest deeps of trouble, and affliction. Read *Heb.* 11. and observe in how many difficulties, in how many deaths that noble army of Martyrs lived, by virtue of faith. Yea and they lived well and cheerfully (as you will find there) Our Saviour adviseth his disciples, to lay up for themselves *treasure in Heaven*, where no moth came to corrupt, no thieves to break through, or steal. Is it not an excellent thing for a Christian to have a life beyond the gun shot of a persecution, beyond the mercies, or cruelties of bloody wretches? The life of faith is such as makes a man *post funera vivere*, nay in *funere vivere*, to live when he is dying. *Paul* was in *deaths often*, yet lived by faith; he saith of himself and others of the servants of God, that they were *killed all the day long*, yet they lived still, they *lived by faith*. The *life of faith* cannot be taken away by *any evil hand*: No nor can the comfort and sweetness of it be touched or empaired by the *Sons of Belial*.

2. *It is a distinguishing life.* The unbeliever may live the life of a beast, which is the life of a beast, he may live the life of a man, which is the life of reason; but notwithstanding this, he may perish for ever: but he that liveth the life of faith shall not perish, he who liveth this life shall live for ever.

3. Lastly, *It is a free, and independent life.* We account in the world, that that man liveth the best life, that liveth the freest life, in least dependency upon others. Hence we do not account the life of a Beggar, or a Servant, or a Child, so good a life as the life of him, that lives upon none, but upon what he hath of his own. There's none in the world lives so free a life as he who lives by faith upon the promise, his life is independent upon the whole Creation, it is hidden with Christ in God. But this is enough to have spoken to this piece of a Christians duty in an evil time.

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SERMON XLVIII.

Pſal. XXXVII. 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8.

Verſe 1. *Fret not thy ſelf becauſe of evil-doers, neither be thou envious at the workers of iniquity.*
Ver. 3. *Truſt in the Lord, and do good.*
Ver. 4. *Delight thy ſelf alſo in the Lord.*
Ver. 5. *Commit thy way unto the Lord, Truſt alſo in him.*
Ver. 7. *Reſt in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, fret not thy ſelf becauſe of him that proſpereth in his way.*
Ver. 8. *Ceaſe from anger, and forſake wrath, fret not thy ſelf in any wiſe to do evil.*

HAving ſhewed the equity and wiſdom of Divine Providence in governing the affairs of the world, ſo as that oftentimes, *the vileſt men are exalted, and the wicked walk on every ſide, The rod of the wicked lyeth upon the lot of the righteous, and they are chaſtned every morning, and plagued every moment, whiles the eyes of the wicked ſtand out with fatneſs*, and they have what their hearts can wiſh, and are often ſuffered to devour thoſe who are more righteous than themſelves: I am inquiring what the duty of a Child of God is under ſuch a diſpenſation of Divine Providence; and for this purpoſe I have choſen this text, perhaps more fully expreſſive of it, than any other ſingle portion of Scripture. Part of it I have opened. I have ſhewed you *Negatively*, they ought not to *fret*, to be *angry*, or to be *envious*. *Poſitively*, I have ſhewed you it in their duty to *live the life of faith*. I now proceed.

3. Thirdly, It is their duty to *delight themselves in the Lord.* You have it here v. 4. *Delight thy self also in the Lord.* Such a time as this is usually a time when the Child of God, cannot delight himself in the Creature: it may be he hath a dear, a loving Wife, dutiful, and pleasant Children, and would delight in them; but a Prison must separate him from them, or an Exile, or Banishment must make their Company very unpleasant to him. It may be he hath a full, and plentiful estate, and could take a pleasure in that; but he seeth that is by Peecemeal pul'd from him every day, and because he will enjoy his conscience, and keep peace there, he shall not enjoy that property which the Laws of the Nation, and his honest Labour, or the gifts of his Friends have invested him with: now at such a time, and under such a dispensation of Providence as this is, what shall a righteous man doe, what is his duty in such a day; my Text telleth you, *he shall delight himself in the Lord, Delight thy self in the Lord.* Delight is nothing else, but the Soules *Complacency, Rest,* and *Triumph in an object.* So that to make a thing or person the object of Delight there must be an apprehended goodness in the object, and the Soul delighting it self in it, *pleaseth it self with it*, and *resteth*, and *Triumpheth*, and even *leapeth for joy in* the Enjoyment of it. There is in delight more than a content, pleasure and rest of the Soul in its object; the Soul Triumpheth, Leapeth, and even Shouteth for joy. God is to be considered in himself, so his name is *Jehovah, Elshaddai*, a Fountain of Sufficiency, Power, and Goodness. There are three things which must concur to make a reasonable Soul to delight in any object, how good and excellent soever it be in it self. 1 *Propriety*, 2 *Possession* and *Application*. 1 *Propriety*. Let a thing or Person be in it self never so good, never so excellent, and let it be so apprehended by me, this may render it the object indeed of my love, but not of my delight. For saith the Soul what is all this to me? here it is impossible that a wicked man should have any *Delight in God*, because he hath no propriety or interest in him. He may possibly from Reason conclude that in God there is an *infinite Power, Sufficiency, Goodness*, he can have no true notion of God but he must conclude this. The *first beeing* must necessarily have an infiniteness of Power, and consequently of *Sufficiency*, and the *Fountain of Good* from whom all good floweth, must necessarily have all good in him; but let him be never so apprehensive of this, yet so long as his

Soul

Soul saith, what portion have I in God? God is a stranger, an enemy to me, he can never delight himself in God: *will the Hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty?* Job 27. 10. *If thou wilt return to the Almighty, then shalt thou delight thy self in the Almighty.* None but the Child of God can delight himself in God, because he alone hath an interest and propriety in him, he alone can say, *my Lord*, or *my God*.

2. *Possession also is necessary to delight.* Suppose a man to have a right and title to an Estate, and consequently a propriety in it yet if he be kept out of the Possession of it he can take no delight in it. Hence it is that a Soul that hath a true right and title to Christ and a real interest in him, yet if it lieth under dark apprehensions of this title, and interest, he cannot *delight* himself in the Lord, for *delight* requires not only propriety, but some degrees of the apprehension of that propriety: Now while he apprehendeth, that his Sins have separated betwixt God and him, he wanteth such a possession as is necessary to delight.

3. A third thing is *Application*. Let a Soul have never so true a propriety in God, never so true a possession of the promises of God; yet if he doth not make application to his Soul of that knowledg of God which he hath and of the promises in which he hath an interest, his Soul will have no *delight* in God or in the promises: now this application is made two wayes.

1. *By Meditation*, often thinking of God, and upon the promises. My meditation of him (saith *David*), shall be sweet: *David* speaks of a great delight he had in Gods Commandements; they were *his Meditation night and day*. Psal. 104. 34.

2. Secondly, *by Faith*, assuring the Soul, and giving it certain Evidence of the truth of the Promises. Now, from this discourse both appeareth, 1. What there is in God for a Soul to delight in, in such an evil day as I have been discoursing of, when his People are very low, and his Enemies are very high. It is that power, and sufficiency which is in him, by which he is able to Relieve them; and that goodness which is in him, and rendereth him always ready to help, and willing to save so as nothing can stand betwixt us and our desired Salvation, help and deliverance, but only his wisdom, by which he better knoweth times, and seasons, and what is good, or bad for us than we doe. The Soul knowing and apprehending these things, and likewise its own propriety, and interest in God, and being put

into some possession of this Propriety, in a day of evil makes its application to such promises, and portions of his word, as he hath revealed his will in, proper to such a State as the Soul is in: hence it comes to be *well-pleased with God* in his dispensations, it is brought to a sweet, and pleasing rest, and triumpheth in its portion, in the day of greatest Evils, and singeth with *David*. Psal. 73. 25. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* and there is none upon the Earth that I desire *besides thee? My flesh, and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my Portion for ever*, v. 26. Now this is both the duty, and priviledge of every Child of God, and indeed these are both great arguments to perswade it. It is their priviledge, for though there be a *Power*, a *Sufficiency*, an infinite goodness in God, which is inseparable from his Divine beeing; yet this not being enough to bring the Soul to a pleasure, delight and complacency in an object, without a *Propriety, Possession* and *Application* of it, it is manifest, that only those Souls, who have such a propriety, interest and *possession*, and are in capacity to make such an Application, can delight themselves in the Lord; and as this is their Priviledge, so it is also their duty: which will appear to you if you please to consider,

1. *That there is enough in God, for the Soul of a Child of God to please it self with, under all dispensations.* Shall I shew you what that is.

1. *Whatsoever is done in the World is done by him.* It is the Lord who lifteth up one and throweth down another, there is no Evil in the City which he hath not done.

2. *In all God doth pursue the noble, good, and wise ends of his own glory.* Whatsoever the intentions of men are, whether *Assyria* mean so, or so, God pursueth still the same design of his own glory, being his own end, in all his *Efficiencies*, and in all his permissions, and to this end he ordereth all things.

3. That he is *a God infinitely wise*, and it must be said of all his works of Providence as well as creation, *In wisdom he hath made them all.* His Judgments are indeed a great deep, but they are a deep of Divine wisdome; and all that God doth or suffereth to be done in the World, he doth, he suffereth all to be done according to his infinite wisdome, and counsel.

4. That he is *the same in power that ever he was. Once have I spoken, yea twice have I heard it* (saith the Psalmist) *that power belongeth unto God*; so as if he pleased he could when he pleased alter

ter the state, and complexion of things, and turn the wheel, that now runs upon the lot of his people, upon the neck of his Enemies, and put wicked men in the stead of his afflicted people.

5. *That his love is the same that ever it was toward his people,* and is working towards, and for them under the darkest, and most gloomy dispensations of Divine Providence. God loveth his children in Prisons, as well as in Palaces, in a poor and low, as well as in a more high, and prosperous condition, upon dunghils as well as upon Thrones: now lay all this together and Judg if a child of God hath not ground enough to delight himself in the Lord under all dispensations of Divine Providence. It is not enough to please his Soul, and to bring it to a rest for him to think, what is now done in the World, or in that part of the World where my Lot is cast, *my heavenly Father doth it all,* and he ordereth all things for his own Glory, he is infinitely wise and knoweth how to fetch out his honour from all, he hath all power in his hand, and can turn his hand upon the little ones, upon the poor and afflicted of his flock whensoever he pleaseth; and he loveth me as well in this low afflicted, poor, despised estate as he did when the world went better with me, and I had more credit and repute in it, more of the riches, honours, power, and enjoyments of it than I now have. Is not here ground enough for a Soul under such dispensations to delight himself in the Lord, especially considering the promise in the Text; *Delight thy self in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart?* But besides this, how often doth God call to us for this duty? *Psal.* 33. *v.* 1. *Rejoyce in the Lord, O you righteous.* Joel. 2. 23. *Fear not, O land, be glad, and rejoyce, for the Lord will do great things,* v. 21. *Be glad then you children of Sion, and rejoyce in the Lord your God.* Phil. 3. 1. ch. 4. 4. *Rejoyce in the Lord. Rejoyce in the Lord, and again I say rejoyce.* We shall find this hath been the constant refuge and practice of the people of God. *David* his third Psalm was composed when he fled from *Absolom,* his 7th Psalm when he was afflicted with the words of *Cush* the *Benjamite:* his 34. Psalm, when he changed his behaviour before *Abimelech* the Philistim King: his 52. Psalm upon occasion of the villany of *Doeg* the *Edomite:* his 54. when the *Ziphites* made a discovery of them to *Saul:* his 56. Psalm when the *Philistines* took him in *Gath.* The former part of his life, until the Lord setled him upon the Throne of *Israel* and *Judah,* was indeed nothing

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else but a time of trouble and great afflictions, when his enemies were very high, and he was very low, he had little, or nothing in the creature to delight in now at this time, the *Psalmes* tell you his relief, and practice, which was to delight himself in God. Thus *Habbackkuk*, ch. 3. v. 17. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossome, neither shall be fruit in the Vine, the labour of the Olive shall faile, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall*, that is, though all sensible relief, and comfort, shall fail: *yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* To press you to this duty, I shall only mind you of what I have already told you.

1. That there can be no such providences befal any Child of God, but he may find enough under them still to delight in God: when he can see nothing for a Sensual eye to delight in, he may yet find enough for his Spiritual eye to delight in. Is it not matter of pleasure to thee to think, Well let times goe how they will, I have a God to go to, though (saith *Job*) *Wormes shall eat this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God?* To think that now God is but doing his own work, and though men oppress, yet he that is higher then the highest considereth the matter? To think that God is able to turn the ball when he pleaseth, that in the mean time he is in the love and favour of God, he may have communion with God, and God will provide for him? These and an hundred such things as these afford matter enough for the child of God to delight himself in the Lord at all times.

2. Consider again, *how equitable it is, that Children should* at all times delight themselves in him, because he at all times delighteth himself in them: whom the Lord loveth he chastneth, as a Father his Son in whom he delighteth; his chastening is not a dispensation of wrath, but of wisdome. Observe how he speaketh to his afflicted Church. *Isa.* 54. 11. *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests and not comforted*, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with saphires. Christ was *anointed* to *appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oyl of joy for mourning, and the garment of gladness, for the spirit of heavinesse*, Isa. 64. 1, 3. Though his people *have lien amongst the Pots* (as the Psalmist expresseth it) yet he hath a pleasure in them.

3. Let me Thirdly, offer to your consideration, *the advantage of this delighting your selves in the Lord in a day of Evil.* It would

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arme the Soul against all the temptations of an evil time. 1. It would *abstract the mind from the world*: we see if the Husband delights in his Wife, or a Father on his Child, how it draweth off their hearts from all other objects, that all are nothing to them in comparison of that object in which the great delight of their heart is. 2. *It would fill the mind of a man*, so as it should say to all the world, as *Esay*, *I have enough, I have enough, keep what thou hast unto thy self*; or as *Jacob* (whose delight was in *Joseph*) It is enough: is *Joseph* yet alive? It is enough. 3. *It would give the Soul a rest.* The mind of a man resteth in the object of its delight. 4. Finally, it would wonderfully quiet the mind as to the Will of God; we are usually satisfied with what is done by those persons whom we principally love, and delight in. Let this therefore be our study, our great labour and business, to bring up our hearts to a delight in the Lord. Study his attributes that you may know what he is in his Power, Goodness, Truth, Wisdom &c. Study his promises, which concern this life, or that which is to come; particularly those which more specially sute thy circumstances: Consider the examples of the Saints, and Servants of God, in thy circumstances; meditate upon these things, whet them upon thy heart; say often to thy self, This God is in himself, Thus and thus he hath revealed himself, and he who hath said it, is *Power*, *Goodness*, *Truth*, &c. But this is enough to have spoken, to this other piece of a Christians duty, under such dispensations of Divine Providence. I proceed to another piece of Duty.

4. *Depart from evil, and do good.* You have it. *vers.* 8. *Fret not thy self in any wise to do Evil.* And *vers.* 3. *Trust in the Lord and do good*; you have them both together, *Psal.* 34. 12. and 1 *Pet.* 3. 12. Now this *doing of good*, is a very large term according to the intent of all that duty, which is required of us by the precepts of the first and second table. There is a duty which we owe unto God, all which is comprehended under the first and great commandement, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and all thy Soul, and all thy Strength.* Thus that man doth good, that loveth, and feareth God, that prayeth unto him, and performeth all those acts of homage, and worship which God hath in his word required, as much and as zealously and warmly in the worst, as in the best of times: this is properly a doing of good, it is *honest and just*, and what God requireth of us; it bringeth

profit

profit and advantage to our selves; it will bring comfort, sweetness, and peace to the Soul. So that take *good* in what notion you will, this is a true *doing good.* Again, there is a *good* which may be done to our selves, or to others: the Apostle commandeth us to *do good to all*, Gal. 6. 10. thus our Saviour commandeth us to *do good to them that hate us*, and the Apostle *Heb.* 13. 16. commands us not to forget to *do good and to distribute*; and it is one piece of our doing good, *Isa.* 1. 17. to *judge the fatherless, and relieve the oppressed.* Further yet, there is a *good of our general calling*: This is comprehensive of the whole duty of a man considered in no further capacity, than that of a creature towards God, or that of a Christian relating to the Lord Jesus Christ, and owning him. There is a good of our *particular calling*, respecting us with reference to our Relations, as Magistrates or Subjects, Husbands, or Wives, Ministers, or flock, Parents, or children, Masters, or Servants. Finally, there is a *good* of a particular season, the works, and business of our day relating to the particular circumstances, and dispensations of Providence, under which it pleaseth God to bring us. Having thus far discourst of good, and distinguished of that, it is easie to understand what *Evil is.* It is either the omission of some of these duties, or the commission or doing some things which are opposite to them. I take the precepts of the text in the large sence. A Christian ought to do all manner of good, and to abstain from all omissions of any duty, or commissions of any thing which is contrary to that duty, which God expecteth from him, either in his general calling, or in his particular Relation; he is at all times *to eschew evil, and to do good.* The precepts of God, *Psal.* 37. 26. *Isa.* 1. 16, 17. 1 *Pet.* 3. 12. concern him, and oblige him at all times; but it is their more especial duty, with reference to evil times; and indeed this is the readiest way to make times better. *Evil times* are so called upon a double account, either with respect to sin, or to *punishment*, These times are evil times wherein sin aboundeth, and the love of many groweth cold; now our sins contribute to the aboundings of sin, in the time wherein we live: we use to say that if every man would sweep his own door, the streets would be clean. Times are also called evil with respect to punishment, to some judgments of God that are abroad in the world: now for us *to do good*, to depart from evil and do good is the way to have the judgments of God averted from us. *Wash you* (saith God

Isa. 1.

(*Isa.* 1. 16, 17. *make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from you: come let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, you shall be as snow; though they were as crimson, you shall be as white as wooll.* You have it vers. 6. *Do good, and thou shall dwell in the land, and* (as we Translate it) *verily thou shalt be fed.* Zeph. 2. 3. *Seek you the Lord all you meek of the earth, it may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lords anger.* Ten righteous persons would have saved *Sodom.* Besides, evil times being usually times of suffering as to the people of God; it is unquestionably their great concern to take heed, that they *suffer not as evil doers.* 1 Pet. 3. 14. *If you be reproached for the name of Christ*, saith the Apostle, *happy are you; for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you.* On their parts he is evil *spoken of, but on your parts he is glorified; but let none of you suffer as a murtherer, or as an evil doer*, &c. We ordinarily call suffering-times evil times; now it is the great wisdom of a Christian to make the best of the worst of times, that they may suffer with comfort, and not lose their Crown in suffering; there is no such way to secure this, as to suffer in, and for doing of our duty. Again, there is no such way as this to *convince*, or *condemn Adversaries*; who are the Instruments of evil towards you: It is our duty as much as may be, so to live, as to reconcile the world to the ways of God; at least so to live, as *if we* cannot win and gain them, yet we may shame and condemn them. This you shall find the Apostle did, who lived in the first and most furious times, 1 *Pet.* 2. 13. *Having your conversation honest amongst the Gentiles, that whereas they speak evil of you as evil doers, they may behold your good works, and glorifie God in the day of their visitation.* As there is an error of Opinion, and an error of Practice; so there is a double way of *conviction.* The first is by *Argument*, as *Paul* convinced the *Jews*, Acts 18. 28. The second *is by a contrary Practice.* The *first* reacheth the *Judgment*, the *second* the *Conscience*, Joh. 8. 9. They who heard Christ were convicted by their Consciences. If by doing good thou doest not convince sinners, and reform them, thou wilt most certainly condemn them, *Heb.* 11. 7. *Noah condemned the old world.* Further yet, by this means thou shalt have peace within: In the world (saith Christ to his Disciples, *Joh.* 16.) you shall have trouble, *but in me you shall have peace*: we are sure enough in, and from the world to meet with trouble; it is our great concern to secure our peace within: now there is no other way to secure this, but to keep a Conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards

men. If a man hath a troublesome Neighbour, if yet he hath a quiet Wife, he will do well enough, he hath peace at home: If he lives in wicked and disturbed times, yet if he hath a quiet undisturbed Conscience, this is something, and he will the better grapple with his other troubles: I say this is the way for a man to keep a quiet Conscience, to depart from evil, and to do that which is good. Finally, thus a Christian shall evidence his Faith in God's rewarding him; for that man who in an evil day doth evil, or neglecteth to do good, cannot be said regularly to trust in God; because he useth not the means, in the use of which he may expect Gods fulfilling his Promise: *Take heed* (saith the Apostle,) *that there be not in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living God.* All departing from the living God in an evil day, is a certain sign of unbelief, or distrust in God as to the issues of his Providence. Let me therefore beseech you that fear God, and are brought under such a dispensation of this, to take care as to this. Let not the evil of others be a temptation to you to omit doing good: I will yet further open it in a few particulars.

1. *Be sure you keep close with God in the duties of his Worship.* It is a sad thing for a state of affliction to drive a man from God; God chasteneth his people to make them better: *In their affliction they will seek me early*, Hos. 5. 13. 'Tis very sad, when affliction hath a quite contrary effect upon us; when as the Scripture speaks of *Ahaz, when he was afflicted, he did more wickedly.* So God hath reason to say of any person: This is that person who when he was in affliction, left prayer, reading, hearing, left his closet-walking with God, *&c.* It is a mark of an ill Servant, not dutiful Son; when he is beaten for his faults, not to ask his Fathers blessing, but to run out of his doors.

2. *Be not ashamed nor afraid to appear for the interest of God in evil times.* St. *Paul* in the worst of times was not ashamed of the Gospel. Our Lord speaketh dreadfully in this case, when he telleth us, that he who is ashamed of him before men, of him he will be ashamed when he cometh with his Angels. This is a particular Service every good Christian oweth unto God, not to be ashamed of the cause and interest of God in an evil time; own thy self a Servant of God, when his Name is most blasphemed, his truths and ways most disparaged, his people most exposed.

3. *Perform all that duty, which thou owest to the worst of men.* It is a woful error for any Christian to think that he can do no wrong

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4. *Do good to them that hate, and persecute thee, bless them that curse thee:* It is our Saviours lesson, *Mat.* 5. 44. I remember God gave his people a charge, *Jer.* 29. 7. *To seek the peace of that City, whither they were carried captive, and to pray unto the Lord for it.* It was an evil time, when they were in Captivity, and the *Babylonians* were very evil persons; yet God commandeth his people to pray for them, and to seek their peace: Let them curse, but bless you; let them persecute, but do you pray. Thus *David* did for his *Enemies*, when they were sick he *humbled himself with fasting, and with mourning*; as for his Brother, he tells you, he lost nothing by it, *his prayer returned into his own bosom.*

5. *Take heed finally of using any unlawful means to be rid of the evil that is upon you*: This is a temptation will much molest us in an evil time, and to which all our hearts are too too prone; this is a pecular evil which a child of God in such a time, should study, and make it his business to depart from; but I shall have occasion to speak more to this under the next head of Duty, upon which I shall enlarge, as it is contrary to the duty of Patience, and the fruit of a Soul making too much haste. But I know this is an hard saying, we have many temptations to the contrary, for a man to do good to others when they are doing evil to, and against him; this is very hard and much a cross to the grain *of flesh and blood.* Let me therefore conclude with a few Motives or Arguments to enforce what I have been speaking unto you. For

1. Consider First, *That not to do this, is to be overcome with evil*: It is the Apostolical Precept, *Rom.* 12. 21, *Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.* Consider first, *how dishonourable* it is for one that is a Christian *to be overcome with evil*, whether the evil of Punishment, or the evil of Sin; that the lust, wickedness, and sin of another, should make him also sin against God. I would fain know what it is that should in an evil time make the Christian to be worse than at another time: It must either be, *the prosperous state* of the wicked, or *the sadness of his own condition*; for when the wicked are exalted, God's people usually mourn; to be overcome either of these ways, is to be overcome of evil. For the lusts of another to overcome me, to make me sin as much one

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way, by fretting, fuming, vexing, omitting duty, doing what is contrary to it as they do another, through the pride, lust, and cruelty of their hearts; here now the sinful evil of anothers heart plainly overcometh me. Is this, this temptation, because it fareth so ill with thee; this is yet worse, for then thou proclaimest that thou didst only serve God for the loaves he gave thee.

2. But Secondly, Consider, *how honourable it is for thee to overcome thy neighbours evil with thy good?* For me to have so confirm'd, and healthy a Soul, that let a boisterous sinner do what he can, he shall not make me worse; he shall not make me fret, fume, vex, or be impatient, or to do any thing short of, or contrary to my duty; do what he can, he shall not turn me from my course of duty either towards God or Man: how honourable a thing this is for one who nameth the name of a Christian, to be certain, and constant, and unmoveable in the work of the Lord; so as a wicked mans wretched usage of him shall make him but more holy, to walk more close with God, and to pray more for him, and be ready to shew him more kindness, and to do more offices of love for him. I have heard it given as the Character of an excellent Person, *That the way to have a kindness from him, was to do him some injury.*

3. Consider again, *There is nothing which more than this will distinguish one that is a child of God, from one that is not.* It is a great piece of self-denial, for a man or woman to deny himself in his passions, especially those of lust and revenge. Observe the difference betwixt *Job* and his Wife: *Job* suffered much from the hand of God, yet he would not charge God foolishly, he did not speak unadvisedly with his lips; his Wife presently would have him to *curse God and die.*

4. Again, Think with your self *what a base thing it is for a Christian to walk beneath his Principles*, or to change his Principles with his condition. There is nothing more unworthy of a Christian, than to walk beneath his professed Principles, or to change his Principles, and course of life with his condition.

5. Lastly consider, *How great an Argument it will be for thee to use with God to bring thee out of that state of affliction and misery, into which his Providence hath cast thee*, when thou canst plead: That God's severe Providences to thee, have been to thee no temptation to depart from him, or from any part of thy duty; you shall find the Church pleading this as an Argument with God, *Psal.* 44. 9.

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Thou hast cast off, and put us to shame, and goest not forth with our armies. Vers. 10. *Thou makest us to turn back from the Enemies, and those that hate us, spoil for themselves.* Vers. 11. *Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat, and hast scattered us amongst the heathen.* Vers. 12. *Thou sellest thy people for nought, and doest not increase thy wrath by their price,* &c. Vers. 17. *All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsly in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back: neither have our steps declined from thy way. Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god: Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long: we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever.* Thus I have opened to you a fourth branch of a Christians duty, under such a dispensation of Providence, as I have been discoursing of; I shall add but one thing more.

5. Lastly then, It is the duty of a Christian to *rest in the Lord, and to wait patiently for him*; or in short, *under such dispensations, quietly, and silently to wait upon, and for God.* The performance of this duty, will, I conceive lie much in Four things.

1. *A quiet submission to Gods present dispensation*; a submission, and a quiet submission; this is implied in the command of *keeping silence to God.* There is a manifold *silence.* There is a natural *silence* which is opposed to *speaking*; thus he is silent, that hath nothing to say, or saith nothing: Thus, *Lam.* 1. 10. The Elders of *Zion, sat upon the ground, and kept silence.* There is a *prudent, and politick silence*, which is good or evil, as it is circumstanced, *Amos* 5. 13. *The prudent man shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time.* There is a *sinful silence*, which is *a with-holding prayer from God*, or forbearing to *stand up* and *speak for God*, Isa. 62. 6. You that *make mention of the name of the Lord, keep not silence.* Lastly, There is an *holy* and *Religious silence*, Isa. 41. 1. *Keep silence before me, O you Islands.* Hab. 2. 20. *The Lord is in his holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before him.* Zech. 2. 13. *Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.* Now this is that silence which the people of God ought to keep before the Lord in an evil time: But to open it yet a little more fully. The *Philosopher* distinguisheth, betwixt an *internal and external speech*; there is the Language of the heart, as well as of the lips; for the words

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that we utter with our lips, are first formed and conceived in our hearts; our hearts speak first. It is not a natural silence upon either account that is our duty, but an holy and Religious silence; not a silence from thoughts, but from *passion*: not a silence from speaking, but a silence from speaking unadvisedly. Such a silence as *Job* kept, of whom it is said, That he did not charge God foolishly, nor *speak unadvisedly* with his lips. 1. A *silence from passion*, mourning within our selves, fretting, vexing, &c. a man breaketh this silence, when he is overborn with *fear*, or *grief*, or *anger*. These three ways the Soul is disturb'd, and maketh a noise under the dispensations of God, which breaketh this Religious silence. 1. By *Anger*, fretting, fuming, and vexing himself at Gods dispensations: This was *Moses* and *Aarons* failing at the *waters of Meribah*; and *Jonas* his error when the Gourd failed him as to its shelter. But of this I have spoken fully already when I handled the Negative part of a Christians duty under Gods dispensations of nature. 2. *Fear*, Immoderate fear, is another passion that spoileth this silence of the Soul; fear maketh an Earthquake within us, and causeth great unquietness in our Spirits: The Soul that is overborn with fears never keepeth silence. 3. A third passion is *immoderate grief*; this also breaketh the Souls *silence* and *quiet*, Psal. 42. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me?* So as that Soul, that under Gods dispensations of this nature, either fumeth, vexeth, or fretteth at God because of them, or is overwhelmed with immoderate, or unreasonable fears, or is overwhelmed, or drowned in immoderate grief; that Soul doth not keep silence: but that Soul only *keepeth* a due *silence to God*, which under such Providences abideth in a *calm* and *quiet temper*; neither shaken with fear, nor overcome with immoderate grief, or sorrow. This is now *silentium animæ*, the silence of the Soul before, and unto God.

2. But there is also a *silence of the Tongue*: this is a piece of this Religious silence; this is opposed to *murmuring*, *cursing*, *and blaspheming of God*; to speaking hardly of God, as if he were an hard Master, and did not deal justly, or equally with us; to any speaking, which is derogatory to the honour and glory of God: all this now falleth under the first general duty, by which I open *a silent waiting* for God, which I call a free and voluntary submission to the good will and pleasure of God, without any disturbance of passion, or any sinful expressions of our Tongues.

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2. A Second thing, wherein this duty lyeth, is, *A steady dependance upon God for the fulfilling of his Promises made to his people in such a condition*; he that hath nothing to depend upon, or trust to, will not wait; so as there can be no patient waiting, where there is no secret trust and dependance: This is indeed the proper exercise of Faith, I have spoken fully to it when I opened the life of Faith in such a time.

3. A Third thing, in which this duty lies, is in the *Souls expectation and looking out for God: Early in the morning* (saith *David*, Psal. 5. 3.) *I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.* Thus when *Habakkuk*, in the first Chapter of his Prophecy, had put up his Prayer to God, he saith, Chap. 2. that he would *go up to his watch-Tower*: A man goeth up to a Tower, or to some high place to see whether a friend or an enemy be coming, yea or no: It is a piece of our duty in our waiting upon God under his dark dispensations of Providence, while we are waiting, to be also *looking up*, and *living in the expectation of the fulfilling of those promises, which we have discerned, and fixed our souls by Faith upon*; and which we have been praying for. Our hearts should not be dead, we must take heed of saying, *I look for no good*, the heart is dead when it comes to that: The Soul that waits upon God under dark Providences must be looking for good, and confident in its expectations of it from God.

4. Lastly, This waiting must be *in the use of such means as God hath appointed us for the obtaining of the mercy design'd, and promised*; and therefore *Psal.* 37. v. 34. they are put together, *wait upon the Lord, and keep his way.* Now you have this duty of silent waiting upon God opened to you, The Sum of it is this: It is the duty of a child of God under these Providences, to keep his Soul from being overmuch shaken, and overcome with fears or drowned in grief; from fretting, fuming, and vexing at Gods dealings; to keep his tongue from all murmuring, all foolish and unadvised speaking with his lips; to keep his Soul in a quiet dependance upon God for the fulfilling of his word, daily looking up for him after the use of such means, as he by the Law of Nature or in his revealed will hath appointed for the obtaining of the mercy or good thing, which is the matter of our desires, and he hath made the Subject of his Promise, and consequently the Object of our Faith. You have heard your duty, Now give me leave to plead with all you that hear me this day for the Practice of it. I have in this Discourse been exhorting

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to several duties of a child of God under dark dispensations of Providence, when wicked men have been set up high, increased in riches, honour, every way prospered, and the people of God are kept in low, despised, afflicted states and conditions. I remember the Apostle calls to us, *to add* to our *faith*, *knowledg*, to *both vertue*, to *vertue temperance*, &c. Do you also add to your not fretting, not being angry, and envious, a steady exercise of Faith, and dependance on God; to your dependance on God, and trusting in him, an universal departing from evil, and doing that which is good; and to that a patient quiet waiting for God. I shall in order to your better performance of this, offer some counsel, and then press it with some arguments, and so shut up this Discourse.

1. In the first place, There are three things which in order to your fulfilling this point of duty, I shall commend to you to get a through acquaintance with. 1. *Be acquainted with Gods name.* It is *David's* expression, *Psal.* 52. 9. *I will wait upon thy name, for it is good before thy Saints.* It is *the Name of God* which we wait upon: now it is reasonable in order to our waiting upon his name, that we should know his name; for as the Psalmist saith, *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee*, and truly they that do not know the Lords name, will never wait upon him: Well, you will say, *What is his name?* I answer, whatsoever he hath revealed and made himself known by, or to be, *that is his name.* I might instance in many particulars. His name is *God allsufficient*, Gen. 17. 1. *I am the Almighty God.* His name is *I am*, the unchangeable God. His name is *Jehovah*, the *soveraign Lord God*, and therefore we ought to wait upon him. His name is *The Lord*, the *Lord Gracious*, *Merciful*, &c. they that know the Lords name, that are throughly acquainted with the nature of God, as he hath in his word made himself known to us; they will wait upon God, they will see it a reasonable thing that they should wait upon God.

2. In the second place, *get an acquaintance with the promises of God.* Two Sorts of promises you must be acquainted with, if you would bring your hearts into this frame of silent waiting for God. 1. *All those promises that are made to the Church, and people of God*; for support and comfort in, and under troubles, and deliverance out of them: of which the Scripture is full, such as these, *Psal.* 94. 14. *The Lord will not cast off his people, nor forsake his inheritance.* Read at your leisure, *Psal.* 128. 6. *Jer.* 29. 10. *Mic.* 4. 4, 11, 12. *Isa.* 27. 5, 7, 8.

27. 5, 7, 8. *Isa.* 33. 20. *Jer.* 33. 6. A second sort of promises are those that are specially made to this waiting upon God, *Psal.* 37. 9. *Psal.* 27. 14. *Isa.* 40. 13. *Wait upon the Lord, and he shall strengthen your heart. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength like the Eagle; they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk, and not faint.* The promises in Scripture of this nature are very many. These are but a *specimen* of them.

3. Lastly, *Labour to be acquainted with the ways, and methods of Divine Providence*, which is to deal out dispensations of mercy to his people; not presently, but after their waiting upon him some time. *Habakkuk* 2. 3. *The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak; it shall not lie, though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* The Church in her Song saith, *Lo this is our God, we have waited for him; lo this is our God, we have waited for him; we will rejoyce and be glad in his Salvation.*

2. Secondly, *Beg of God a waiting frame of Spirit.* As there is nothing more sinful in it self, nor more tormenting to our selves in an evil day, than an impatient, hasty Spirit; so there is nothing more conducive to our glorifying of God, nor to the quiet of our own Spirits, than a silent waiting Spirit: This the God of Heaven must give, and he giveth it to them that ask him; beg of God those graces which may dispose thee to this patient waiting: I might instance in many habits of grace necessary to bring the soul into this waiting temper: I will touch only upon 4 or 5. 1. *Beg Faith* of God, Faith in his Word and Promise. He that *believeth maketh not haste.* The hastiness and impatience of the Soul floweth from its distrust in God for the fulfilling of his Word. 2. *Hope* is another gracious habit which disposeth the Soul to waiting, we hope for what we see not; for what we see, why do we any longer wait for? 3. *Humility* is a third: the proud soul thinks much to wait, he looketh upon mercy as his due; and thinketh that God wrongeth him whiles he withholds it from him; the humble soul believeth that it deserveth nothing, and is therefore willing upon the least crevis of hope to wait upon God. 4. *Pray for patience*, a passive patience, this is necessary in order to the bearing of evils. Lastly, Pray *for meekness*, a froward Spirit is always an hasty Spirit, and knows not how to wait. Now to press this duty upon you, I shall but name to you several Considerations, leaving them to be digested, and inlarged upon in your private thoughts.

1. Consider first, It *is the work of thy day.* The question is, what God would have a child of his do? when the enemies of Religion and godliness are very high and rampant, and the people of God are low, poor, and afflicted; and God suffereth wicked men to devour those who are more righteous than themselves, as if men were under the same providence as the Fish of the Sea, and the Beasts of the Earth, where, without any regard to right or wrong; the greater devoureth the less: at such a time as this, what should a good and righteous man do? Let *Solomon* answer, *Prov.* 20. 22. *Say not, I will recompence evil, but wait on the Lord and he shall save you.* Hence you shall every-where in Scripture find the Church, and people of God resolving upon it; and the Lord when he instructs his people what to do in an evil day: this is that which he directeth, *Isa.* 60. 9. *Zech.* 3. 8. *Hab.* 4. 5. *Isa.* 8. 17.

2. *It is that which God hath alone left for you to do in such a day.* Our Eyes of sense in such a time are quite put out; we have nothing to do at such a time, but to stand still and see the Salvation of God. *Jer.* 14. 22. *Are there any amongst the Gentiles that can give rain? therefore we will wait upon thee:* we have nothing else to do, we have none else we can wait upon; *therefore we will wait upon thee.*

3. *It is that which hath been the practice of all the people of God, and what they have called their souls to in evil times,* Psal. 52. 9. Psal. 62. 5. Indeed it is the whole business and life of a child of God: It was the practice of the Church, *Mic.* 7. 7. And of *Job.* The Saint hath the promise of heaven, but he must *wait* for it.

4. *Thou hast ground enough to do it,* the Power of God, the Goodness and Truth of God are certainly a sufficient ground of encouragement to any soul to wait upon God, who hath promised help; and is so *true,* that he cannot *lie*; who is *able to help* and to do more abundantly than we stand in need of, and who is Infinite in Goodness, and wanteth no love to prompt him to come in to the relief and succour of his people.

5. *Waiting upon God gives God the honour of many Attributes:* It giveth Him the glory of his Soveraignty, His Wisdom, His Power, His Truth, and His Goodness.

6. *It is a great evidence of your Faith:* He that *believeth maketh not haste.*

7. *It is that which in a day of evil, will distinguish you from wicked and ungodly men:* they cannot wait upon God, but break out into fits of impatience, &c.

8. *There*

8. *There is nothing so effectual in an evil day, to help thee to keep down thy corruptions, to silence thy temptations:* You have heard it in that to which many promises are made, That your waiting upon God is pleadable as an argument for the mercy which you desire: In short, there are very many Arguments might be used to perswade this silent waiting upon God, but I have before spake to many of them, and shall therefore add no more to this Discourse.

SERMON XLIX.

Rom. IX. 15.

For he saith unto Moses, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion.

I Am (as you know) attempting to expound the hard Chapters of Divine providence, giving you some account of those Motions of it, which to us appear most difficult; I have brought these under some heads propounding to speak,

1. First, To such as concerned *the exhibition of the Covenant of works, after the establishment of the Eternal Covenant of Redemption and Grace.* And 2. The Exhibition, or tender of grace to all indefinitely, after the *Decree of Election*, and the fall of Man.

2. The *permission of sin*, and so much sin; sinners, and so many sinners in the world.

3. To such as related to the *Remunerative, and punitive Providence of God.*

4. Lastly, To such as concern the dispensation, both of the more external, and the more *internal and effectual means of grace.* I have spoken to divers Questions, that have fallen under the Three first of these heads; such as fall under the last, remain yet to be

spoken to; but before I come to speak directly to such Questions, I shall lay down Two preliminary Propositions, to which I shall speak something.

1. Prop. *That God in his Providential dispensations of grace, and the means of application of it; whether more external, or more internal; acteth freely and unaccountably, yet is in it both holy and just and good.*

2. Prop. *That God in the dispensations of his penal Providence, in the withholding, or withdrawing of the means of grace; whether more external, or more internal; never acteth upon meer Prerogative, but upon the demerit of the sins of people*; and in this he *acteth justly, and holily.* I will begin with the first of these, and for that purpose I have made choice of this Text; which is a Quotation which our Apostle bringeth out of the Books of *Moses*: you shall find it, *Exod.* 33. 19. *Moses* said unto God, vers. 18. *I beseech thee shew me thy glory:* And he said, *I will make all my goodness to pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.* This is the Text which the Apostle quoteth here: The Argument which the Apostle is upon in this Chapter, is the rejection of the *Jews*; as to which he vindicateth God in Two things. 1. *As to the promise made to Abraham*, a thing which the *Jews* bare up themselves much upon; *that they were the seed of Abraham*, and so in Covenant with God; and if God should cast them off, what could be said to justifie the truth and faithfulness of God? What should become of the promise, the Covenant made with *Abraham* and his seed for ever? The word of God would have no effect. This the Apostle answereth, vers. 6. and so to vers. 13. He telleth them in the first place: *They were not all Israel which were of Israel.* And vers. 7. That *all who were the seed of Abraham, were not all children*; and this he proveth, vers. 7. Because God said, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called*; and that the promise was given to *Sarah, that is,* (saith the Apostle) *they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.* And he tells them, that it was the same case as to *Rebecca*. *Esau* and *Jacob* were both the children of *Rebecca*, but yet *God loved Jacob*, and *hated Esau*, vers. 13. But some may possibly think, this did not answer the Objection of the *Jews*: for admitting that the promise was made to the children of *Isaac*, the *Jews* were such. *Abraham* indeed had a child by *Hagar*, that

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was *Esau*, and he had Sons by *Keturah*; but all the Nation of the *Jews* were descended from *Isaac*, who was the Son of *Sarah*, to whom the promise confessedly was made. To which I answer, The Apostle had yet gained *One main point*, viz. That the *Jews* could lay claim to nothing upon this account, that they were the *seed of Abraham*; for the promise was not made to the whole seed of *Abraham*, but to a *peculiar seed:* Now this *peculiar seed* was not all the *children of Isaac*; this he proveth by the instance of *Jacob* and *Esau*, who were both the children of *Isaac*; for saith he, vers. 11. *The children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil; that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth*; It *was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger, as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* This now proveth, that God was not by his promise tied to all the children of *Abraham* by *Isaac*, but was yet at liberty, to what part of his seed he would fulfil his promise. Well, but might some say, being they were both the children of *Abraham*; how could God in righteousness shew mercy and compassion to one of them, and not to another? vers. 14. *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?* This the Apostle denieth, and that with his ordinary aversation, and detestation, *God forbid.* Now he proveth that there is no unrighteousness in this dispensation of God: Because God had said to *Moses*, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.* So then, (saith the Apostle,) *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* If there could be unrighteousness with God, it must be because God hath somewhere by promise obliged himself to shew mercy to all the *Jewish* Nation: but, saith he, the promise made to *Abraham* and to his seed, will not reach so far: that was not made to the whole seed of *Abraham*, no, not to all that descended from *Abraham*, through the loins of his Son *Isaac*, as appears by Gods hating *Esau*, who was the Son of *Isaac*, and his eldest Son too: But more than this, saith the Apostle, God when he declared his glory to *Moses*, Exod. 33. sufficiently expounded himself: That his promise to *Abraham*'s seed, did not determine his grace to any parts, or Nation; but that he had a liberty left to him to shew, or not to shew mercy to whom he pleased; for he saith to *Moses*, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.* So that the Propesition from this Text is of easie deduction.

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1. Let us consider it *first in the purpose.* Gods purpose of grace was nothing else but his *Eternal willing of some persons, to obtain everlasting life and salvation, in, and through Christ; and in the use of that means which he appointed thereunto*; for the counsels of God, ordered the means, as well as the end: we do therefore suppose that God from all eternity knew *who should be saved*; and that he therefore must needs know it, because he will'd it: for whereas all mankind from eternity are to be considered alike, nothing but the Will of God could bring any part of them more than another, into a salvable estate; especially into a certain state of Salvation. God therefore decreed, or willed some persons to so glorious an end. Now the question is, what made God *to will these*, not others? what can be imagined but *his will*, of which we are able to give no account. *Eph.* 1. 5. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*: hence, it is called the *election of grace*, Rom. 11. 5. and 2 Tim. 1. 8. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ*, before the world began.

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Arminians and *Papists* tell us of Gods electing men *out of a foresight that they* would *believe* and *obey*. If indeed men were to have risen out of the Earth like *Mushromes*, and to have given a being to themselves, and to have created their own Souls, they might have quarrelled the Scripture a little upon this point; but when the bodies of all men were to be of the same clay, and all souls were Gods, which were to inform those bodies, how they should any of them have a disposition to *believe*, or *obey* more than others; unless God had created it in them, or willed that in time they should have it, I cannot understand: and if they say, that they had it from *the will of God*, the matter (as to our point) cometh much to the same issue. God purposed them grace from his own meer good-will and pleasure; he *willed them*, in time to have a disposition to believe and obey; and upon their Faith and Obedience, to have everlasting life.

2. If we consider Gods *acts of grace in time*, they are distinguished, either into the more *external means*: Or secondly, *those gracious habits which accompany salvation*, and make a soul meet for the inheritance of the Saints in Light. The means of Salvation are either the *means of Purchase, and Redemption*; *such was the giving* of Christ, of which Saint *John*, (Joh. 3. 16.) could give us no other account, but *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* For *the means of application*, they are either more external, or internal. The more *external*, is the *promulgation*, or *publication of the Gospel:* See what our Saviour saith as to this, *Mat.* 11. 25, 26. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, who hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes: Even so, O Father, because it pleased thee.* 2. For *these acts of grace by which the Soul is prepared, and made fit for the inheritance of the Saints in Light:* they are *Effectual Calling, Justification*, and *Sanctification*, or *Regeneration.*

1. For *Effectual Calling*, we are said to be called *with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose, and grace. Not according to our works*: so that any thing in our selves is denied, but according to his purpose: Now what is the purpose of God? but the will of God determining this, or that; and it is further added, *And grace*; which speaketh the *free love* and good-will of God in the case; for grace is nothing else but free love. So 1 *Pet.* 5. 10. *The God of all grace*, who hath called you: so that God in the calling of Souls acteth as a *God of*

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grace,

grace, yea, *of all Grace*. Who can give a reason why God by the Preaching of the Gospel effectually calleth one, and not another, out of darkness into marvellous light? but meerly because he willeth. The Evangelist, 1 *John* 13. telleth us, that we are *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

2. *Justification* is another *act of grace, whereby God pardoneth our sin, looketh upon us, and accepteth us as righteous, only for the righteousness of Christ reckoned unto us for righteousness.* Herein also God acteth freely: *being justified freely by his grace*; he giveth of the *fountain of life freely*. To this purpose is that, *I will heal your backsliding, and love you freely.*

3. For *Regeneration*, or *Sanctification*, which is that act of grace by which we are renewed in the inward-man, and made conformable to the image of God: This is our being born of the Spirit; and our Saviour compareth the motion of the Spirit to the wind, *which bloweth where it listeth.*

2. But further yet, *the dispensations of grace* by the *hand of Providence*, must necessarily bear proportion to the *purpose of grace*. We are *blessed in Christ with all spiritual blessings, according as he hath chosen us in him*, saith the Apostle, *Eph.* 1. 4, 5. Nothing cometh to pass in the world, either as an *act of grace*, or a pœnal dispensation; but it is in pursuance of some purpose of God. Now it was impossible that the purpose of God should have any other foundation than his Will; for the eternal purpose must be antecedent to any good, or evil done by us; we are but of yesterday. That man, or woman knoweth nothing of God, and hath very false conceptions, and apprehensions of the Divine Being, that doth not conceive of him as a God from all eternity; knowing whatsoever should come to pass in the world; nor is it possible for us to apprehend how God should know any future thing, but because he willed it; for what but the will of God should bring it out of a not being, into a being; out of the order of a contingency, into a certainty; which it must have, or God could have no certain knowledg of it. Now it was not possible that any thing in the creature should move God from eternity to will any one grace, because there was no creature pre-existent to this eternal act of God; nor yet co-existent with it. It is true, say some, but yet God did foresee, that such, or such, would believe, repent, obey, *&c.* using the liberty of their wills better than others; and to such God willed

willed eternal life. But I cannot understand any thing in this more than trifling. For I demand, from whence is that better inclination and disposition of one mans will, than another? Where was the principle of this good, was it to proceed from God? then it little differeth from what we say, at least in this case it doth not; for still in the dispensations of his grace he moveth freely, and from his own meer will; only he willeth, first to give grace, then glory. Will they say, this *foreseen* good disposition (as is pretended) is from a mans self, then there must be another fountain of good besides God, all good acts proceed from some habits, and powers as their principles. I demand whence is that principle, that power, and habit in us, which God should foresee, and therefore will a Soul to life? Will they say it is from man? then say I, every good gift cometh not from God; man is thus made a fountain of *good*, indeed of all good; for he is thus made the fountain of that good, upon the foresight of which, it is according to this Doctrine; that God willeth all his providential dispensations of grace and mercy; and if this be not to set up man in the Throne of God, and to take away from God the glory of that Attribute, in which, above all he delighteth, I understand nothing.

3. Again, If *acts of grace and mercy* were not free and unaccountable, only fountain'd in the good-will and pleasure of God; *grace could not be grace*: for what is grace, but free love? *To him that worketh the reward*, (saith the Apostle) *is reckoned not of grace, but of debt*, Rom. 4. 4. If by grace, then it is no more *of works, otherwise works would be no more works*, Rom. 11. 6. The very notion of grace importeth freeness: *grace* not *free*, is no *grace*; if you take away liberty, you take away grace; I mean Original liberty. I know when God hath promised, he is *just and righteous to forgive*, as the Apostle saith, But God had an Original liberty to promise, or not to promise: In short, they are no better than enemies to the grace of God, who go about to found the reason of its acts any-where else than in the Divine Will: *God will have mercy, because he will have mercy*; that's all the account which we can give, either of Gods purpose of grace, or of any acts of grace pursuant to that purpose: And so I pass to the Second part of the Proposition.

2. *Memb.* That supposing this, *There is no unrighteousness with God.* This is consistent with the holiness, justice, and goodness

of God; and consonant to the Divine being and Nature. It is exceedingly agreeing to the Nature of the *Divine being*, to be the *first cause* of *all that is upon any account good*; and in this sence it is true, eminently true, which our Lord telleth the Pharisee, *There is none good but one, and that is God*; other things are *derivatively* good, he is *Originally* good: now I say it is but reasonable, that he who is the *first being*, should be owned the *first cause* of *any good that* is in the World; all dispensations of Grace, being effluxes of goodness: he also must be the first cause of them; and they could be originated in nothing but the Divine Will. 2. Besides, there is nothing more consonant to the *Divine being*, than to *be the Soveraign Lord, and the sole cause of his own actions.* God every where in holy writ, makes himself known to us under the notion of the Lord; it is an impeachment of the *Divine Soveraignty*, to assert God originally not at perfect liberty, as to his own Acts, *to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy*; and *extend compassion, to whom he will extend compassion.* God in Scripture is set out under the notion of a Potter, the Creature, under the notion of Clay: God shewed *Jeremiah* this, when he carried him down to the Potters house, *Jer.* 18. and shewed him the Potter at work; making a Vessel of Clay, and when it was marred in his hand, making another Vessel as it seemed good unto him; then telling him, Ver. 6. *O house of Israel! Cannot I do with you, as this Potter? Behold, as the Clay is in the Potters hand, so are you in my hand, O you house of Israel*; which also (alluding to that Text) confirmeth, *Rom.* 9. 21. *Hath not the Potter power over the Clay of the same lump, to make one Vessel of honour, another of dishonour.*

2. Nor can this possibly be judged *unrighteousness with God*, for *for then would God be in a lower capacity than his Creature*; what man of us is there, who doth not think he hath a free, and absolute power, over his own acts of goodness, and mercy? To shew them to whom he pleaseth, and to withhold them from whom he pleaseth; yet is there a vast difference betwixt the Creature, and the Creator in this point; for all Creatures are under the Law of their Creator; they are things and persons under authority, and are not soveraign Lords of their own actions; yet which of us doth judg our selves accountable to our Neighbour, for an act of mercy; now if there be no unrighteousness with man, in this case, if a man doth not think himself bound to give any account to his Neighbour, why he is more kind to one than to another?

Why

Why gives he a gift to one, which he giveth not to another? How is God unrighteous in such a discrimination? What if God willeth to shew mercy, and the riches of Divine Grace to one, & not to another? Though God in these motions, be free and unaccountable, yet he is also just and righteous; and the reason is, because he is neither bound, nor a debtor unto any. But this is enough, to have spoken to the Explication, and Confirmation of this Proposition. For Application,

Use 1. In the first place: We may learn from hence, what vain dreamers those are, that go about to *find out another Fountain, for acts of Divine Grace*; and seek a cause *in man, for the Grace bestowed upon him.* They say, the head of the great River *Nilus*, could never yet be found; It hath been sought for, and many have travelled possibly some thousands of miles, but yet it cannot be found. But the head of *Nilus* will be found, before men will find any cause of Divine Love out of the Divine Will. It speaketh a wonderful arrogance in men, to make God accountable for his acts of Divine Grace; what greater arrogance, and vanity can be imagined than this? When a poor Creature, will not himself be brought to an account, why he gives one Begger mony, and not another; or why he giveth to one Child a greater Portion, than another (though they both be the acknowledged fruit of his Body) that yet this Worm should dream, that God must be accountable to his reason, why he sheweth mercy to this man, and not to another; when they are both the work of his hands. It is certainly enough to say, *He will have mercy, on whom he will have mercy; and extend compassion, to whom he will extend compassion.* What Pride, what Arrogance is this, not to allow to God whom we confess to be the supream, and most free agent; the liberty which we will yet claim, and challenge for our selves? Nor is this more unreasonable pride, and arrogance, than it is folly and Vanity: It is searching for a bottom in an Abyss; searching for a cause Antecedent to the first cause. God, they say, from all Eternity, foresaw that such, and such would believe, would obey, would incline their hearts to his Testimonies; it must be then certain, that that they would do so; God could have no certain knowledg of that of which there was no certainty. Now I would fain understand, whence *this certainty should be*, otherwise than from the *will of God*, determining their wills to these certain good inclinations, more than the wills of others; all others have Souls, reasonable Souls as well as they; whence is it, that their Souls incline to that which is good, and

the wills of others to that which is evil? Surely, to *will*, and to *do*, are both from God. Thus *vain Man would be wise*: when as he indeed is but *like a wild Asses Colt*: Proud men torture themselves in vain, to find out a principle of good, and of life in themselves; And how unreasonable a thing is it, to charge God with unrighteousness, upon this hypothesis? Shall a man be master of his own favours, who is yet a debtor to the Law of God, and under an obligation to do good to all, because God hath so commanded him; and shall not God, who cannot in any wise become a debtor to his Creature, farther than he is so made by his own Covenant and promise? Shall it be a reasonable thing for a Man to say, I will be kind to such a one, because I will; and doth he think he is not further to be accountable to his fellow Creature? And shall not the Soveraign Lord of Heaven and Earth say, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and because I will have mercy; but Man shall for it call him before the Tribunal of his own Reason.

Use 2. In the second place, what reason have we who are made partakers of this mercy of God which bringeth salvation, to adore, admire, and be thankful to him for it? Now this concerneth either all of us in general, or else some particular Souls. 1. Let us first consider this so far as it respecteth all of us: whosoever liveth within the pale of the Church, under the preaching of the Gospel, may see reason, 1. *To adore and admire the goodness of God towards them.* 2. *To tremble and fear*, lest we be found unprofitable under the *means of grace.* The Apostle propoundeth the question concerning the *Jews*, Rom. 3. 1, 2. *What advantage then hath the Jew above the Gentiles? Or what profit is there of Circumcision?* He answereth, *Much every way*, because *unto them are committed the Oracles of God.* Whether the Gospel in the preaching of it be a sufficient means of Salvation, having such a constant operation of the Spirit attending it; that if men will they may believe and be saved: and the *ministration* of *the Spirit* be little differing from the ministration of the Gospel, and inseparable, or at least never separated from it, though affirmed by some, may be justly doubted. But that it is a great and high means of Salvation, and there is no man living under the faithful and powerful preaching of it, but if he misseth of Life and eternal happiness it will be his own fault; and the proximate cause of damnation will be in himself I do not doubt. Now God hath not dealt thus with

every

every Nation, O consider how many Nations, and People there are in the World, who never heard of Christ; amongst whom, the joyful sound of the Gospel did never come; People that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, whom the day-star from on high did never yet rise upon? Doth any say? But what good doth the Gospel, or how is the preaching of the Gospel such a mercy, if God doth not give unto them that are under the sound of it, effectual Grace; so as their hearts are changed upon the preaching of it, and they converted and eternally saved? I answer, The Apostle thought it a mercy, and no small mercy, that the Jews had, the *Oracles of God committed to them*, to them and not to other People; yet for all this it is most certain, That there were many amongst the Jews, who kept not the Laws, Statutes, and Ordinances of God; the Jews might have said the same thing, yet *Moses* crieth out, Deut. 4. 8. *What Nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord your God is to you in all things? That hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous?* Again (as I have oft told you) though I dare not say with some, That all men sitting under the sound of the Gospel, have a sufficiency of grace given them, that if they will, they may turn unto God and live; yet I do think that there is such a sufficiency of Light, and means, that if men will do what in them lies, God will not be wanting to them in his effectual Grace; Men shall never have this to say: *Lord, I did what was in my power to do, I would have repented, believed, but thou deniedst me that Grace which was necessary to it.* Now herein appeareth the greatness of the Grace of the Gospel. The Heathen walk in darkness, and in the shadow of Death; they have not a sufficient Light to guide their feet into the way of Peace. But where the Gospel is Preached, there a great Light shineth, a Light sufficient to direct men into the way of Life. But,

2. This looketh dreadfully *upon all those who wilfully shut their eyes against Gospel-light, and stop their Ears against this joyful sound.* This (saith our Saviour) is *the condemnation, that when Light is come into the World, men love Darkness more than Light, because their deeds are evil.* Matth. 11. Our Saviour upbraideth the Cities where his mighty works had been done, and his Gospel preached. *Capernaum* and *Bethsaida*, he saith, they had been *lifted up to Heaven*, but *they should be thrown down into Hell*: that it *should be more tolerable* for *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, *yea for Tyre and Sydon in the day*

of

of judgment, than for them; when the Gospel hath been long in a place, faithfully preached, it is much to be feared, that God hath had mercy in that place, upon as many Souls of that Age, as he will have mercy. But this is but a Digression, we have reason to *adore God* for his free mercy to us in giving us the Gospel, the faithful and powerful preaching under the Gospel, many may and do perish, but where the Gospel comes not, there is no hope. Now whence is it, that the rain of the Gospel falleth upon one City, not upon another? Upon one Country, not upon another? That some Nations have not so much as the sound of it, the feet of them which bring the glad tidings of Peace, come not amongst them: and in the same Nation where the Gospel is preached, some have a sound, and little more: Preachers in some places, in stead of preaching the Gospel, Preach human Philosophy; or the lusts of their own hearts. In other places the Word of God is preached faithfully, and powerfully; so *that the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*; Men are *compelled to come in.* This difference, in the external ministration (which let me tell you, hath no small influence upon the eternal concern, and interest of men; for God doth not ordinarily work by way of miracle, and heal the eyes of the blind, with *Clay*, and *Spittle*) is fountain'd only in the free-will, and Grace of God.

Use 2. But I trust I speak to some, *who have tasted further of the mercy and Grace of God*, than receiving the general Dispensation of the Gospel with their outward ears. God hath by his holy Spirit, upon the preaching of the Gospel, effectually moved their hearts, and conquered their Souls into a subjection to Christ. They have embraced the Lord Jesus Christ, by a *Gospel-faith*; they are brought by a mighty hand out of darkness, into marvelous Light; and translated out of this Kingdom of Sin, and Satan, into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus. I have this day been discovering to you, the Fountain of this Grace; of which God hath made you partakers: you have heard that it is the will of God only, which hath distinguished betwixt you and others; It is not because you were more nobly born than others: nor because you were more rich, more honourable, or by nature better complexioned than others; God saw no more goodness in your natures, than in the natures of others, you were all the same flesh; he infused into all Souls of the same nature, and species; only he hath

hath willed rather to ſhew mercy unto your Souls, than to the Souls of others, becauſe he hath ſet his love upon you. There are three duties that hence lie very obvious.

1. The Firſt is, *Praiſe, Thankfulneſs* and *Admiration.* Certainly, every ſuch Soul, ſtands highly obliged with the *Pſalmiſt* to cry out: *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bleſs his Holy Name. Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his benefits.* If free Grace will not affect our hearts, and fill our mouths with a new Song, nothing will. It muſt certainly be an amazing conſideration, for a Soul to ſit down and think; I was in the ſame maſs, and lump of loſt man-kind, that others are; I was by Nature a Child of wrath, as much as any; my Childhood and Youth were Vanity, as much as any others; I was grinding at the ſame Mill, it may be in actual ſins, I outſtripped many others: Now that the Lord ſhould look upon me, and pluck me as a brand out of the Fire; that God ſhould open my eyes, and change my heart: What did God ſee in me? Poſſibly, my more external circumſtances, were far leſs, and more unvaluable, than thoſe of thouſands of others; my Houſe was of ſmall account, and little eſteem; there are many more great, and noble, more wiſe, and prudent than I am; many, who in all appearance, ſo far as man can judg, might have been more ſerviceable to God than I am, or am ever like to be: now that the Lord ſhould paſs them over, and ſhew mercy to me; certainly, no Soul can ſeriouſly think of theſe things, but muſt be raviſhed with the apprehenſions of the inaccountable love of God in theſe things; and ſay, *What ſhall I render unto thee, O Lard, what ſhall I render unto thee?*

2. This notion of *Gods Soveraignty, freedom,* and *inaccountbleneſs in the diſpenſations of his Grace, ſhould teach every Soul that hath been, or ſhall be made a partaker of it, the great leſſon of humility.* The Apoſtle, *Rom.* 3.27. giveth this as the reaſon, why God hath ſetled the juſtification of a Sinner, upon a bottom of free Grace; and hath excluded works, that he might alſo exclude boaſting; and teach thoſe who glory, to glory in the Lord; upon this Argument, the Apoſtle exhorteth the Gentiles, not *to boaſt againſt the Jews,* Rom. 11. 22. *Behold the goodneſs, and the ſeverity of God* (ſaith he) to thoſe who abide in their unbelief, ſeverity; to thee, *goodneſs.* Pride is a ſinful habit, diſpoſing the Soul to *ſwell* in the opinion of ſome excellency in it ſelf; and a little thing will ſwell our corrupt hearts. The Apoſtle propoundeth this very conſideration,

tion, as a cure for that tumour in the Souls of Christians, 1 *Cor.* 4. 7. *For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou which thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?* It is nothing but the will of God, that hath made a difference betwixt thee, and the vilest Sinner breathing; betwixt thee and the most filthy Drunkard, the most furious Persecutor, *&c.* It was not for any worth, any goodness, or holiness which the Lord saw in thee; but of his meer free will, and Grace; God hath shewed mercy to thy Soul, what hast thou now of thy own to boast, or glory in? Thou hast indeed reason to glory, and to make thy boast in the Lord; and to bless God for what he hath done for thy Soul, more than for a thousand others; but there is no thanks to thee, his will, his own will, was the fountain of his Grace extended to thee. God hath had mercy upon thy Soul, only because he would have mercy. O therefore be not high-minded, but fear, and walk humbly before God.

3. Lastly, this calleth upon all of you who have tasted of this free and unaccountable Grace, to live a *distinguishing life and conversation.* There is a Generation that fancyeth that the Doctrine of *Free-Grace,* opens a door to Liberty. It is but the old Cavil, in Saint *Pauls* time, there were those that thus accused the Doctrine of *Free-Grace,* as if it gave men a liberty to go on in sin; as appeareth by the Apostles anticipation of that Cavil, Rom. 6. 1. *What,* saith he, *shall we then continue in sin, that Grace may abound? God forbid*: and so he goeth on, shewing that any such conclusion from his principles was unreasonable. How shall we (saith the Apostle) who are dead unto sin, live any longer therein? Special distinguishing, Free-Grace both *deadneth the Soul to Sin,* and inflameth the Soul with a love to God, who hath made the Soul to differ; so as that Soul cannot live as other men, the *love of God constraineth him,* he must apprehend himself obliged to do more for God than others, because God hath shewen more mercy to him than unto others; and that meerly because he would shew mercy. What can possibly be imagined to have a greater, and lay an higher obligation upon the Soul, to all manner of holiness in conversation, to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, as the Apostle speaketh.

SERM.

SERMON L.

Hoſea XIII. 9.

O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf, but in me is thy help.

I Am now come to the ſecond general Propoſition, which I promiſed you to diſcourſe upon a little. In my laſt exerciſe, I diſcourſed to you of the *Fountain of Life and Grace*, which we found to be the free-will of God: There is no other account to be given of Gods ſhewing mercy, but *becauſe he will ſhew mercy*, which is moſt certainly true, as of Gods eternal acts of Grace, ſo of his Acts of Providence, as to the diſpenſation of his *firſt Grace*. The next Propoſition I mentioned was this,

2. *Prop. That God in his providential Diſpenſations of puniſhment never acteth by meer Prerogative, but according to the demerit of his Creatures.* In his Diſpenſations of Grace, and the means of it, *he acteth meerly from his own Will: he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy*; and there is no other account to be given of thoſe Diſpenſations, he ſendeth the Goſpel to this place, rather than another, becauſe he will ſend it; he changeth this Man or Womans heart, and turneth it to himſelf, becauſe he will ſhew mercy: But the caſe is otherwiſe in his penal Diſpenſations; there God acteth not upon *Prerogative*. God there hath a Prerogative; for *may not the Potter* do what he will with his Clay? But it is one thing to have *Jus abſolutum*, an abſolute right, and power which we muſt claim for God, ſo long as we know him to have an abſolute right, and Soveraignty over the works of his hands; 'tis another thing for God *agere ſecundum jus abſolutum*, to act according to his Soveraignty, and abſolute power: this we ſay God doth

not. I pray obſerve: I reſtrain my Diſcourſe, to *Gods Diſpenſations of actual Providence:* I ſhall not meddle with the *eternal Councils of God* in this caſe, that is quite beyond my Subject propounded. It is unqueſtionable, that the puniſhments of Sinners, both in this Life, and that which is to come, as well as the other great iſſues of his Providence, concerning the rewards of righteous men, were ſet in order by an Eternal deliberation; but whether by a meer *negative*, or *poſitive Decree*; whether upon *conſideration of ſin*, or no, are points I am not at all concerned to intereſt my ſelf in; having all along reſtrained my diſcourſe to the motions of *Actual Providence*: and certain it is, that God in thoſe Diſpenſations, doth puniſh nonē either here, or hereafter, meerly becauſe he will, but upon conſideration of Sinners demerits. Shewing mercy, is an *Act of Grace*; puniſhments, are Acts of Juſtice. The gift of God, χάεισμα τῦ θεῦ, is Eternal Life, that is a guift; and what is freer than gift? But the *Wages of Sin, is Death*; τὰ ὀψώνια, a Man muſt earn Death, before he hath it from the hand of a merciful God: but Eternal Life muſt be *given him*, if ever it be his Portion; ſo ſaith my Text. *O Iſrael thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf:* I will open this in two or three concluſions.

1. I *underſtand it of all kind of deſtructions*: poſſibly, the Text may chiefly relate to temporal deſtructions, 'tis *Ephraim* to whom the Prophet is ſpeaking; and it is about a bodily deſtruction: but the Concluſion is general, and the Text is well enough applyed by Divines, to Eternal deſtruction; all deſtructions, whether of Body, or Soul, are of our ſelves; yea, I take the Aphonimy of the Text, to be more eminently true, of the deſtruction of the Soul, than of the deſtruction of the Body. A Child may dye for the ſins of the Parents, Subjects may dye for the ſin of their Prince; as in the caſe of *Saul*'s *Children*, that were hanged in *David*'s time, and in the caſe of thoſe many thouſands, which in *David*'s time were cut off for his ſin in numbring of the People. The Children of God may be involved in a common deſtruction, and ſuffer as they are a part of a ſinful Nation; God may take them off, to deliver them from an evil to come, as in the caſe of *Abijam* the Son of *Jeroboam*. God may puniſh his people with afflictions of this Life, for the trial, and exerciſe of their graces; but in Eternal deſtructions, God can have no other end, than the puniſhment of the perſon, and all ſuch deſtruction, is for a mans ſin; his perſonal ſin.

3. When

3. When we ſay, that *Mens deſtruction is of themſelves*, you muſt underſtand, *of themſelves as the meritorious cauſe*; not of themſelves, as the *principal efficient cauſe*. God is rightly enough entituled, to all the Evil of puniſhment in the City. It is no diſhonour to his Majeſty, to be the *Author of his own Judgments*; which is all, that Mr. *Calvin*, or any of the ſame mind with him, have ſaid; which hath made ſome ſo clamour againſt them, as having aſſerted God to *be the Author of Sin*. For God to be the Author of puniſhments, is no ſtain to his Glory; but a Declaration of his Juſtice, and of his Righteouſneſs. Chriſt himſelf ſhall come (as the Apoſtle telleth us) in flaming fire, to take Vengeance upon them who know not God; and obey not his glorious Goſpel. God ſhall ſay to thoſe on his left hand, *depart from me you curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*. But our deſtruction is from our ſelves, as the proximate, and meritorious cauſe; though from God as the efficient cauſe. It is not from the Soveraign will of God meerly, but from the ſtubborn and rebellious will of Man, that any Soul periſheth. Divines do ſay, that though God cannot will the doing of any Sin, yet he may will that it ſhould be done. The Holy Ghoſt telleth us, that *Herod*, and *Pilate*, and the Jews, employed in accuſing, condemning, crucifying of Chriſt; did *no more, than what the Council of God had determined ſhould be done*. But I ſay, notwithſtanding this, the proximate cauſe of mans Damnation is not, becauſe God hath willed their Damnation; it is the guilt of their own Sins, the demerit of their own Tranſgreſſions, which bringeth them to the Pit of Deſtruction. The Gracious God ſheweth mercy, and ſaveth all who are ſaved by Prerogative; by *Grace you are ſaved*, ſaith the Apoſtle: he hath the ſame Prerogative in matters of Death, that he hath in matters of Life; but he uſeth it not, but there acteth according to his Statute-Law, *The Soul that ſinneth ſhall dye*. He who ſaveth men without themſelves, damneth none without themſelves. Men are *ſaved by Grace*, but they are damned *by Sin*. *The wages of Sin is Death*. *Omne peccatum eſt voluntarium*, all Sin is of our ſelves, it muſt have ſomething of our own will, and conſent to, and in it.

3. Thirdly. *Although this be certain, that all deſtruction, all puniſhment is for Sin, yet the particular proximate cauſe of ſome puniſhments is unknown to us*. I will inſtance in one particular, a puniſhment, undoubtedly, a moſt ſevere puniſhment; *The witholding the Go-*

spel, and so the ordinary means of Grace and Salvation, from the far greatest part of the world. They hear nothing of the Lord Jesus; they have not the Oracles of God, the ordinary means of Grace are hidden from them; There is no doubt, but their own wilful sinning is the cause of it. But whether the Sin of their Progenitors who had the Gospel, and sinned it away, which to me seemeth a little hard; (for I can hardly be brought to agree, that God for the *sins of Relations* punisheth their Correlates in Spiritual things.) Or that prodigious sinning, which they are guilty of; not living up to what may by them, by their natural Light be seen of God; (for the Apostle, *Rom.* 1. gives you a true Copy of the lives of all Heathens) is not so easie to determine. I should incline much to fix the cause here, they have (though not the Book of Scripture) yet the Book of Gods Works, and Nature; (though not Men Ministers of the Gospel to them) yet the Heavens declaring the Glory of God, and the Earth shewing his handy-work; those standing Preachers, of the Power, Glory, and Greatness of God; whose sound is gone out, and going dayly out, over all the world: they have the *Sun*, and *Moon*; they see much of God, in and by them, and may learn much of God from them: but knowing God, and not glorifying him as God, but becoming vain in their imaginations; they worship Devils, and Stocks, and Stones, the work of their own hands; and shutting their eyes against the Light of those common notions, which are engraven in all reasonable Natures; they give up themselves to commit all filthiness, and unrighteousness. So not using the Light of Nature and Reason, which God hath given them, God justly with-holdeth from them the Talent of the Gospel. If God doth grant it to others, which yet it may be are guilty of the same sottish abuse of their natural Light, and Reason, therein he is good and gracious; but if he denieth it unto them, therein he is not unjust or unrighteous. But I say, there may be some particular instances, as to which it may be hard for us to assign what particular sins God so securely proceedeth against the Nations, Families, or Persons for: but this is certain, Sin is certainly the next cause of all severe dispensations of punishment. Now this will appear to us. 1. From *the evidence of* Scripture. 2. From *the evidence of Reason, concluding from Scripture-Principles.*

1. First,

1. First, from the *plain evidence of Scripture.* In the case of the Heathen, amongst whom the Devil hath the greatest harvest of perishing Souls: of these the Apostle speaketh, *Rom.* 1. 18. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men:* Observe the words, God doth not reveal his wrath against the Heathen, meerly upon the account of his *Soveraign Power*, because he will do it; but *against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men:* he goeth on declaring their *ungodliness*, and their *unrighteousness*. Vers. 21. *Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.* They had light enough from the Works of God in Nature, to shew them other kind of Ideas of the Divine Being, than it was possible for them to find amongst created beings; but they turned the Incorruptible God into the image of a *corruptible man*, yea, of *creeping* things, and *four-footed beasts*. The Apostle telleth them also of their unrighteousness, Vers. 29. *Fornication, wickedness, covetousness, malitiousness; they were full of envy, murders, debates, deceits*, &c. Now for these things the wrath of God was revealed against them. The Apostle telleth us, *Rom.* 2. 14, *That when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things which are contained in the Law, they are a Law to themselves.* And Vers. 26. *If the uncircumcision keep the Law, their uncircumcision shall be accounted to them for circumcision.* I am not of their mind, who think that the Heathen have *light enough* to shew them the way to Heaven. I know not, if that were true, why the Scripture should set them out under the notion of persons, or people that *sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death*; until *Christ*, as *the day-spring from on high, hath visited them*: But I am sure they have sin enough to justifie God in damning them; and permitting them to walk in their own ways, until they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and brought judgment upon themselves. I also believe, that if there be found a *Job* in the Land of *Uz*; If there be one found amongst the Heathen, who *feareth God, and eschewth evil*; who walketh up to his natural light; God hath his secret way to reveal, and apply Christ to them, so as he shall not perish. But yet I cannot believe that his natural light shall save him, because the Scripture telleth us, *That there is no other name under heaven, than the name of Jesus Christ, by which any can be saved; neither is there Salvation in any other.* There are several things in nature that we know are so, but we do not know the way of them. In the

Isa. 9. 2. † Mat. 4. 16. Luk. 1. 7, 9.

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matters of grace there are ſeveral things alſo which we underſtand not the way of God in: Three come into my mind at preſent. *The way of God with an infant*, we are not ſure that all infants, no, not that all Baptized infants ſhall be ſaved; but we doubt not, but of many ſuch is the Kingdom of God: but for the way of God with the Soul of one that liveth not up to the exerciſes of reaſon, and the intelligentneſs of the ordinary means of Faith, and Regeneration; this we do not underſtand. 2. *The way of God with a thief upon the Croſs*, I mean with a ſinner forgetting, or neglecting to turn unto God until his laſt hour; we do believe that God hath mercy upon ſome ſuch Souls, but how God worketh in them theſe habits of grace, which are neceſſary according to the ordinary rule; how they are born again of the *Spirit*, and Baptized, not with water only, but *with the Holy Ghoſt*, and *with fire*: this we do not underſtand. And ſo Thirdly, *The way of God with an Heathen*, that never cometh to the light of the Goſpel, nor hath any external Revelation of Chriſt: I ſay, how the Spirit of God moveth, and which way it cometh into ſuch a Soul; this we do not underſtand, but leave it amongſt the unſearchable things of Divine Providence, which we believe and revere: If there be (as I ſaid before) a *Job* in the Land of *Uz*, *he ſhall know that his Redeemer lives, and that he ſhall ſtand at the laſt day upon the earth, and he ſhall ſee him with his eyes*: But which way God revealeth this to him, we underſtand not. In the mean time theſe hidden things being left to God, *revealed things belong to us and to our children*; and this is revealed: That the wrath of God, as to the Heathen, is revealed againſt the ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.

2. But this is much more evident concerning ſuch as live *under the means of grace, and offers of ſalvation*: Oh *Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem*! (ſaith our Saviour) *how often would I have gathered thee as an Hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but thou wouldeſt not*? I would, what hindered then? *thou wouldeſt not*. Thus God of old ſpake to the *Jews*, Jer. 23. 24. *This thing I commanded you, ſaying, obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you ſhall be my people, and walk you in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you: But they hearkned not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counſels and imaginations of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward*. So *Jer.* 16. 13. and in a multitude of places in Scripture: Indeed this is the Language of God quite through-

throughout Scripture. So in the New Testament, *You would not come to me that you might have life*, Joh. 5. 40. I hear some bold Disputer against God, saying, *How is this possible*, if it lyeth not in the power of a man to believe, and to turn unto God? I have fully answered this before. All mankind in *Adam* certainly had a power to do so much as God required of man in order to his Salvation; but certain it is, that every man hath a power to do something; to do much more than he doth in order to his repenting, and believing: God will find at the day of Judgment, matter enough to condemn sinners for what was their duty to have done, and in their power to have done; and an instance will be wanting at that great day of one Soul, who did what was in his power; both as to the doing of Good, and the avoiding of sin; to whom God denied his special, and effectual grace: Christ *Mat.* 21. 32. *Layeth this to the Jews charge*, That when they had heard *John*, *they repented not afterward, that they might believe*: But this is a theam I have before inlarged upon, and shall now add nothing to that Discourse. Having thus far opened the Proposition, I shall only give you Two Reasons of it.

1. First, *That no imputation might be laid upon an holy, a most holy God*: Though the Scripture doth justly assert a *Soveraignty to God* concerning the work of his hands, and the same power over his creature, which the Potter hath over the clay; yet it everywhere avoideth all imputations of rigour, injustice, cruelty; God will not be accounted an *hard Master*: what if this man hath but one Talent, another hath five, and a third hath ten; yet I hope he that hath but one, may trade proportionably to that one, as far as that will go; and if he doth not, and he be punished, his Master is not to be condemned for an hard Master, in taking that one Talent from him; or otherwise punishing him for the non-improvement of the stock betrusted to him: Suppose men to have but the *one Talent*, of the *light of Nature*, which is the case of the poor Heathens; another to have *five Talents*, the advantage of Gospel-light, and the ordinary means of grace; a third to have *ten Talents*, *effectual grace* superadded to both these: If he who hath but one Talent, or that hath had the five Talents, have not done with them what he might have done; and God condemn him for such omissions, or actions contrary to his duty; here can be no imputation upon God, he cannot be said to have done cruelly, severely, or injustly. God was under no obligation

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to truſt him with *five Talents*, that abuſed, or would make no good uſe of one; nor to truſt him with *ten Talents*, who would not uſe, or did abuſe his five; but now ſhould God have puniſhed, or condemned any without their ſins as the meritorious cauſe, there might have been ſome imputation upon God.

2. Secondly, God hath ſo ordered it, That the ſinner *ſhall be inexcuſable*: It is but reaſonable, that the holy God ſhould ſo diſpenſe out his puniſhments by the hand of Providence, that a ſinner ſhould be *without excuſe*; this the Scripture lets us know once and again. In the Parable it is ſaid, That he who was turned out from the Wedding-feaſt for want of the Wedding-garment, was *ſpeechleſs*; he was without an Apology, he had nothing to ſay for himſelf. So *Rom.* 1. 20. *Then they are without excuſe.* So *Rom.* 2. 1. *Therefore thou art inexcuſable, O man:* This is one deſign that God drives, ſo to manage and govern by the motions of his Providence. Now ſuppoſing this, that *all deſtruction is of a mans ſelf:* That God doth not condemn any out of *meer Prerogative*, or becauſe *he will*, (whatever he might do, *vi abſoluti juris*) every ſinner muſt ſtop his mouth, and be ſpeechleſs in that day, when God ſhall ſay, *Take them, bind them hand and foot, and caſt them into utter darkneſs, where is weeping and wailing, and guaſhing of teeth.* What hath any ſinner to ſay for himſelf, if his deſtruction be of himſelf? I have done with the doctrinal part of this Diſcourſe, I come to apply it.

1. *Uſe.* In the firſt place, *obſerve the great difference between Gods proceedings in the methods of his grace, and of his pœnal diſpenſations*; diſpenſations of mercy and judgment, are both Gods work: But the one is his *Natural* work, the other is his ſtrange work, *Iſa.* 28. 21. Gods workings in the methods of his grace, are, *ex mero ſuo motu & beneplacito*, they meerly flow from the nature of God, without any meritorious cauſe in the creature; he ſheweth mercy becauſe he will ſhew mercy, and extendeth compaſſion to whom he will, and becauſe he will extend compaſſion; he giveth grace becauſe he will give grace: here God acteth from meer Soveraignty and Prerogative; but he never dealeth out puniſhments, but there is ſome cauſe in the creature, ſomething which moveth him to proceed and deal in ſuch a manner, and meriteth ſuch a puniſhment: He ſaveth Souls becauſe he is gracious, he condemneth ſinners becauſe he is righteous, *cum largitur gratiam per miſericordiam hoc fit, cum negat, per judicium*, ſaith *Nieremberg*, wrath is not

not declared, saith he, unless when it is due, lest there should be unrighteousness with God; mercy is shewed, when and where it is not due; this maketh no unrighteousness with him: So that I say, there is a vast difference to be observed betwixt Gods dispensations of mercy and goodness, and his dispensations of wrath and severity.

2. *Use.* In the second place, you may from hence conclude; *How little reason there is for that clamour, which some make against such as are called Calvinists*; under which nick-name, they indeed wound, not only *Augustine* and *Prosper*, and others of the ancients; but many Divines in *England*, especially that lived three, or fourscore years a-go. Two great Accusations they bring:

1. That they affirm God to *be the Author of sin*; yet neither Mr. *Calvin*, nor any of his Followers ever said so, nor dare any now say so: What's the matter then? because they say, *That God hath willed, that sin should be committed, though he hath neither commanded, nor approved the action, nor any way influenced it by the way of efficiency*: Therefore God must be the Author, or these Divines make him the Author: Or *because God is the Author of his own judgments, and penal dispensations*; and God sometimes punisheth sin with sin; therefore God must be the *Author of sin*; taken properly as it is an oblique action, contrary to his Law. This is (forsooth) their proof of that crimination; when-as there are no Divines in the world, but think it, not only *blasphemy*, but *nonsense*, to talk of God as the Author of *sin*; which must be an action contrary to the *will*, liking, and approbation of God, as the very nature of sin doth import.

2. Their second Crimination, is, *That God hath damn'd his creatures, out of his meer Prerogative* and *Soveraignty*. We do indeed think, and must so think, till our Adversaries can possess us with other Idea's and notions of God, than either Scripture, or reason will help us with; That there is nothing which either hath, or shall come to pass in the world, but God did know from all eternity; neither can we conceive how God should know any thing, but because he willed it; either in a way of *efficiency*, or to *permit it*. We do say, that God had a *jus absolutum*, from eternity; an absolute right over his creatures, to determine how he pleased concerning them: But we also say, *That in his penal dispensations he acteth not according to his Soveraignty and absolute right*; and that every mans destruction is of himself; and the proximate, and meritorious

ritorious cauſe of the puniſhment, and eternal ruin of any Soul, is his own ſin: God doth not condemn any Soul, but for ſin, recompenſing their own iniquities upon their heads; and whatſoever is abſolute and Soveraign right, his Law, from which he never varieth, in the motions of his Providence, is, *The ſoul that ſinneth ſhall die.* Where is the difference then? What maketh this great clamour, and odious repreſentation of eminent Divines, as to the method of Gods proceedings in his actual Providence? *Papiſts*, *Arminians*, *Calviniſts*, all are agreed, *That the wages of ſin is death*, *The ſoul that ſinneth ſhall die*: God will condemn none but for ſin. Only it ſeems they are not agreed, as to the *Nature*, and *Attributes*, and *Prerogatives of God.* Thoſe Divines whom they call *Calviniſts*, muſt aſſert God to have the ſame Power over his creatures, which a *Potter hath over the clay*: This the other will not underſtand, though God expreſsly told it the Prophet *Jeremy*; and the Apoſtle from him hath expreſsly told it us: and this is all the difference that I can underſtand.

3. *Uſe.* Thirdly, you may from hence learn, *How the Righteouſneſs of God ſhall be cleared in the laſt day, in the condemnation of ſinners, although it hath not pleaſed him to give to all a power to that which is truly, and Spiritually good.* This is a point which very many in this Generation alſo will not underſtand, but the fault is in themſelves. If God (ſay they) hath not given to all men a power to *repent*, and *to believe*, how ſhall he be righteous in the condemning of Sinners? There is no conſequence at all in this, but upon this *Hypotheſis*: That except men have a power to do that which is Spiritually good, they are in no capacity to do that which is morally evil. Whether they have a power to repent, or to believe, without the effectual Grace of God, yea, or no; Certainly, they have a power in a thouſand things, to break the Law of God; yea, and to do alſo many things which are contained in the Law of God: and although the doing of theſe things would not ſave them, yet certainly, the omiting of them, or doing contrary to them, may give God a righteous cauſe to condemn them. Suppoſe one of you who are Fathers, to have two Sons, both of them wild, and fond of their play, and eager at it; you call them both to come to you, and tell them, that if they will come, you will give them both mony to go and buy ſuch things; but if by ſuch a time, they have not thoſe things, and appear

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to you in, and with them, you will certainly whip them. One of theſe Children hearkens to you, leaves his play, comes running to you, and begs the money you promiſed him; then procures the things, and appeareth to you in the habit you deſired, and you are well pleaſed with him. The other Child, is mad of his play (which if he would he might leave) he could not have the things without mony out of his Fathers Purſe; but he will not leave his play, nor ſtir a foot towards his Father, nor ſo much as ask his Father for mony; his Father indeed, ſends him no mony, but ſhuts him out of his ſight; and ordereth him to be ſeverely whipt, becauſe that he would not leave his idle game, and come to him, and ask the mony of him which he promiſed; and becauſe he had not bought the things, and appeared before him, in that habit, and dreſs, which he had commanded: will not one ſay, this fooliſh Child, is right ſerved? ſhall his Father be judged unrighteous or ſevere, becauſe he gave the Child no mony (as he did the other) and the Child could come by the things without mony, and if it had them not, could not appear in, or with them, before his Father? The caſe is much the ſame, betwixt God and us. God ſeeth two Men, or Women, both his Creatures, *alike in Adam*, both born in Treſpaſſes and Sins; wildly playing over the hole of the Aſp, and the den of the Cockatrice; ſporting themſelves in Sin, and in an hourly danger of Hell-fire: God calleth them by his Miniſters, to leave their Sins, and to turn unto him; he ſaith, let him that hath been drunk, be drunk no more; let him that hath been unclean, be unclean no more; let him that hath told a lye, that hath *broke my Sabbaths*, lye, and break my Sabbaths no more; let him read my Word, and hear my Word; and let him come, and pray unto me, and beg of me, an heart to believe and to repent, and I will give it him; and he that *believeth ſhall be ſaved*; but in the great day, it ſhall be found, That he who hath *not repented, and hath not believed, ſhall be damned.* One of theſe ſinners, leaveth off his leud courſes, falls to an external Diſcipline, readeth the Word, heareth the Word of God, applyeth himſelf to God by Prayer, beggeth of God an heart to repent, and to believe his Goſpel: God hears him, gives him a power, gives him repentance unto Life, and a ſaving Faith in Chriſt; and he obtaineth everlaſting Salvation. The other is mad of his Luſts,

and after them he will go, let what will be the iſſue of it; he will not read the Word, not hear that his Soul may live; nor ſo much as ask ſpecial Grace of God, not to plead with God for Faith, or Repentance. God giveth them not to him, he dieth in his impenitency and unbelief: God throweth him into Hell, for his not repenting, not believing, according to his Word. Is there any unrighteouſneſs with God in this caſe, more than in the Fathers dealing with the Child, upon the former Suppoſition? What pretence is there for it? The Sinner, you will ſay, could not repent, could not believe, without the ſpecial Grace of God, which was never given him. No more could the Child buy thoſe things the Father willed it to have, and come before him with, unleſs the Father firſt gave it mony; the Child had no mony of its own: But the Child might have left its play, it might have read, and heard the Word, he might have come to God by Prayer; and begg'd of him a ſoft, and contrite heart, and a believing heart, he had power to do all this; and had he done this, God had not been wanting to him in his further Grace. *To him that hath ſhall be given* ((ſaith our Saviour) that is, to him that *hath, and uſeth, and proveth what Gifts and Graces he hath as he ought to do, ſhall be given more Grace.* But this the poor wretch hath not done, but dieth an hard-hearted, an impenitent and unbelieving wretch; what *unrighteouſneſs is there with God* in his condemnation? he periſheth in his own iniquity; his blood is upon his own head, his damnation lieth at his own door, his deſtruction is of himſelf, his help might have been from God, if he had not been wanting to himſelf. O ſinful men, *are not the Lords ways equal?* Yes, yes, they are our own ways that are unequal; the ſtraight ways of the Lord, are only made crooked, by our idle fancies, our proud hearts, and corrupt reaſons, and fooliſh miſpriſions.

Uſe 4. In the laſt place, let me apply this diſcourſe, by way of *Exhortation*, it will afford matter of Exhortation. 1. To the *people of God.* 2. To the *men of the World*, thoſe I mean that are not yet converted unto God. 1. To Gods People.

1. To you it ſpeaketh, *to make you more afraid of ſin for the time to come.* Sin in Scripture is ordinarily reſembled by ſickneſs, and a diſeaſe. Now what is true of ſickneſs is true of Sin, every ſickneſs is not unto death; but every ſickneſs hath ſomething of death in it; it leadeth to the Grave: it is not the laſt ſtroke, at the

the giving of which, the Tree falleth; but it is a blow, in order to the fall of it. Every ſin doth not bring forth death; yea as to you, *No ſin* ſhall bring forth death; becauſe *Rom.* 8. 1. There is no condemnation to them that are in Jeſus Chriſt; but every ſin hath ſomething of the nature of a *ſelf-ruining*, and *deſtruction* in it. *The wages of every ſin is death*; the natural tendency of every ſin is unto death. It is the Gift and Free-Grace of God that as to you prevents it; and although your ſins do not bring forth an Eternal ruine and deſtruction to you, becauſe the Blood of Chriſt, and the Interceſſion of Chriſt hath prevented, and will prevent that; yet your ſins may bring forth many leſſer deaths to you: for them, you may be *in deaths often*; for them there may be a death of your peace, and comforts: as there are no temporal Evils, which ſin may not bring upon the people of God; ſo there are few ſpiritual Evils on this ſide of Hell, to which it doth not ſubject them: So that although you be not under the danger of an Eternal ruine, yet you are under the danger of ſo many deaths, ſo many deſtructions, as may juſtly lay a Law upon you, and make you afraid of ſinning againſt God.

2. But Secondly, This *calleth to all of you, to admire the Divine Grace by which you are ſaved.* I hope it is the portion of many of you to whom I am ſpeaking, you are not yet got up to the new *Hieruſalem*, but you are in the right way that leadeth thereunto. O cry, *Grace, Grace*, unto the hand which ſet you upon that Shore. It is true of you, you alſo by ſin had deſtroyed your ſelves, by Grace you are ſaved; you were once Fire-brands, as well as any others; are you now brands pluckt out of the Fire? It was the hand of Grace, that pluck'd you out. *You hath he quickned* (ſaith the Apoſtle, *Epheſ.* 2. 1.) *who were dead in Treſpaſſes and ſins. Amongſt whom alſo we had our converſation of old according to the Luſts of the Fleſh*; you alſo were once acted by the Prince of the Air, who yet worketh in the Children of Diſobedience; and were by Nature, the Children of Wrath, as much as others. It is a ſweet, though in ſome ſence, a bitter meditation to caſt a thought back, and think, Lord! How had I alſo deſtroyed my ſelf? How near was I going to the Pit of Eternal ruine and deſtruction? Nay, how often yet is our Salvation from God? We are every day deſtroying our ſelves, we lye down with ſin enough to juſtify God in deſtroying us before the Morning; and riſe up every day with ſin enough to juſtify God in deſtroying

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us before the Evening. *By Grace we are saved.*

2. But Secondly, Let me speak to those which can have no such good hope through Grace. They yet are in their natural State and condition, in the Gall of bitterness, and in the very bands of iniquity. Sirs, it is that which I have often told you, and I wish the sound of it may never be out of your Ears; you are Creatures ordained to Eternity, when you dye, you dye not like brute-Beasts; Death will not determine your beings, you shall be either Eternally happy, or Eternally miserable: All that I have to say to you, is to *plead with you, that you would not ruine your selves*; and let me tell you, that if ever you perish, it must be because you have destroyed your selves. Do not fright your selves with thoughts of Gods eternal decrees: secret things belong to God, revealed things to us. Whatever Gods secret counsels and purposes be, this is his revealed will; *The Soul that sinneth, and that alone shall dye.* Trouble not your selves with any such thoughts as these, *If I be not elected, do what I will, I shall be damned*; If God hath cast me off, I shall labour in vain; It is the Sluggard (saith *Solomon*) which saith, *There is a Lion in the way.* We cannot *ascend up into Heaven*, to search Gods Books, there is no need of it. The Word is near us, even in our mouths; that telleth us, that God never destroyeth any Soul, but the meritorious cause of it is in himself: and this we know, that *all sin is voluntary*; O then, take heed of destroying your selves, by wilful, and presumptuous sinning against God. Nature teacheth every Man, to look to himself, as to his Life, Health, Estate; and shall not our reasonable Nature, instructed by the Word of God, prompt us to take care of our selves, as to our Eternal Interest? You will say unto me, what shall we do, that we may not de *destroyed*; for who liveth, and sinneth not against God? I have before told you, that in Scripture I find three Answers to this Question. The one is that of St. *Peters*, Acts 2. 31. *Repent and be Baptized*; another is that of St. *Paul*, Acts 16. 31. *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* The other, is that of our Saviour, to the young Man, asking him, *What good thing he should do, that he might inherit Everlasting Life.* Saith our Saviour, *Keep the Commandments.* Those three Texts will give you compleat directions.

1. *Keep the Commandments.* You will reply, but you tell us, that no Man is able to keep the Commandments; but because you cannot do all which God doth require, can you do nothing?

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Well, but you will say, Shall we be saved if we do all that we can to keep the Moral Law? I Answer, No, What then?

2. St. *Peter* tells you, *Acts* 2. 38. *Repent, and be Baptized:* you will reply, but it is God who must *give repentance unto life.* True, we say, God must change the heart; *the Blackamore cannot change his skin, nor the Leopard his spots:* But cannot you consider your sins? Cannot you turn from open sins? Do what in you lieth in order to your Repentance: Well, but you will say, If we do this, Is this enough? I Answer, No, What then?

3. St. *Paul* telleth you, *Act.* 16. *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved:* Still, you will say, But is not *Faith the gift of God?* Have we a power to believe? We Answer, No, It must be given to men on the *behalf of Christ to believe*; But cannot you read the Word of God? Cannot you come and hear the Word preached? When you have heard it, Cannot you meditate therein? Cannot you apply your souls to the Word, though it be Gods work to apply the Word to your souls, and make it to dwell in you? Cannot you beg of God a power to believe? God will not be wanting to that soul, that is not first wanting to it self. The difference betwixt us, and the bold Patrons of free-will, lies here: They hold, *that a man hath a natural power and ability to actions formally, and spiritually good:* This we deny, but yet say, *That man hath a power to actions that are morally, and materially good:* and if he would go about as far as his Natural power would help him, though indeed he could merit nothing at the hand of God; We do not believe, that God would be wanting to him, as to habits of spiritual and effectual grace. Now this is that which I am pleading with you for, that you might not destroy you selves.

1. That you would not give your self a liberty, and let your selves loose to do things contrary to the Law of God, wherein you might restrain your selves.

2. That you would not neglect to do those things which God requireth of you, and which are in your power to do. I shall conclude this, but with Two very weighty considerations.

1. *No punishment is more justly and smartly inflicted, than that which a man hath chosen,* and wilfully brought upon himself; when a man hath chosen death rather than life, and judged himself unworthy of everlasting life, and despised his own mercy; certainly every man must say, he is justly punished, and adjudged to that portion which he hath chosen to himself. 2. Se-

2. Secondly, As no punishment is so justly and smartly inflicted, *so none is more intolerable to be born.* There will be in Hell another fire which shall never go out; but this will be the worm that shall never die: I have done, and shall shut up my Discourse with the words of *Moses*: *I have this day set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.* I have told you which way you must go down into the pit of destruction, if ever you come there; you must of your selves go into it: O let not your destruction be of your selves, especially considering what God hath done, and what he is daily doing; to evidence that in him is your help, if you will apply your selves unto him.

SERMON LI.

Rom. 2. 12.

For, as many as have sinned without the Law, shall also perish without the Law, and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law.

THE business I am upon (as you know) is the expounding some hard Chapters in the Book of Divine Providence; I am upon the last *head*, upon which I propounded to speak to some appearing difficulties, *viz. Gods unequal dispensations of Grace*, whether such as are more *common*, or such as are more *special* and *saving*, as a basis to this Discourse: I have premised, and handled Two preliminary Propositions.

1. *Prop.* That God in the dispensations of his grace, *acteth by Prerogative in a way of Soveraignty, freely, and unaccountably.*

2. Prop. *That in his pœnal dispensations of this nature, he never proceedeth but justly upon the previous demerits of sinners.*

I now come to speak to some Questions relating to these dispensations

penſations of Divine Providence. The Two firſt of this nature, which I ſhall ſpeak to, relate to Gods unequal diſtributions of *common grace*, but ſuch as are ſpiritual means, in order to the obtaining of ſpecial and effectual grace; and his unequal diſtributions of *ſpecial* and *effectual grace*, without which none can be ſaved: I ſhall put both theſe together, and for a ſhort Diſcourſe upon theſe, I have made choice of this Text.

The buſineſs of the Apoſtle in this excellent *Epiſtle*, is to eſtabliſh the great Doctrine of the Goſpel, concerning *the Juſtification of the ſoul before God by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt*, on Gods part imputed, and reckoned to ſinners; and on mans part, apprehended, and applied by Faith; in oppoſition to the Doctrine of the Doctors of the *Jews*, who held the Juſtification of the Soul by the *works of the Law*: In oppoſition to whom he had laid down his grand Propoſition, *Rom.* 1. 17. *That the righteouſneſs of God is revealed from faith to faith:* That is, That righteouſneſs wherein a Soul another day, muſt ſtand juſt and righteous before God, is not a righteouſneſs of our own, ariſing from our performance of the Law; but the righteouſneſs of Chriſt revealed in the Goſpel, which is apprehended, and made ours by Faith. His firſt Argument by which he proveth this, is, obvious to any conſiderate *Reader*: If any be juſtified by works, they muſt either be the *Gentiles*, or the *Jews*; but neither are the works of the *Gentiles*, ſuch, as will juſtifie them: Nor are the works of the *Jews*, ſuch, as will juſtifie them. As to the *Gentiles*, he proveth at large, Chap. 1. That their works were ſuch, as were ſo far from Juſtifying them, *That the wrath of God was revealed againſt them*; for the wrath of God is revealed *againſt all the ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men*; and, as he at large ſheweth, the works of the Heathen were works of moſt notorious ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs; and therefore could not poſſibly juſtifie them. So in this Chapter he proveth that the works of the *Jews* were not ſuch, as could juſtifie them before God; for though they condemned others for ſins, yet they did as bad themſelves. From Verſ. 11. He taketh away all pretence of *Juſtification by works*, both from the *Jews* and from the *Gentiles*: For the *Gentiles*, he ſaith, *they had not the Law*; For the *Jews* they indeed had the Law, but they broke it: Now, ſaith he, *There is no reſpect of perſons with God*, thoſe that ſin ſhall periſh; let them ſin *with the Law*, or *without the Law*: *For* (ſaith he in my Text) *as many as*

have sinned without Law, shall also perish without Law, and as many as have sinned in the Law, shall be judged by the Law. By the Law is here plainly understood the Word of God, which God hath given us to be *a light unto our feet, and a lanthern to our paths*; a light to shew us the way to Heaven: Here is plainly imply'd, That as some sinners perish having the Word of God, and the external means of Salvation; so others perish having not the Law and Word of God, nor the outward and ordinary means which God hath appointed in order to the obtaining of eternal life and salvation. 2. In both these dispensations God is just, for there is no respect of persons with God. Now hence arise Two Questions,

1. Quest. *Whether God granteth to all men sufficient aids and assistances, or means of Grace in order to their Salvation.*

2. Quest. *If God doth not grant unto all men sufficient means, aids, and assistances of Grace, in order to their Salvation: how he can be just in the condemnation of any, to whom he hath not given, such a sufficiency of means.*

1. Quest. *Whether God granteth unto all men sufficient means of Grace, in order to their Salvation?*

We affirm that he hath not. But here we have many Adversaries, to encounter. There are some that affirm that there is a sufficiency of the means, aids, and assistances of Grace afforded to all men in order to their Salvation. Some of the *Arminians* will not go thus far, but they affirm, *That to all those to whom the Gospel is preached, and who are by the preaching of it called to Faith and Repentance, there is a sufficient grace given.* Thus far we do agree as to this point of sufficient grace.

1. That in our first Parent *Adam, all mankind had sufficient grace,* whether we respect external, or internal means; he had a sufficient Revelation of the Will of God, and a sufficient power in himself, in his own will; in the rectitude of his own nature, to have made use of, and apply'd the Revelation he had of the Divine Will, in order to his Salvation; and so all mankind had in him: For as *in Adam all died,* so in *Adam* all men were at first alive, or they could not in the fall have died in him: The Question is not therefore of man, as he at first came out of the hand of God, but of mankind in their lapsed estate, whether they have all such a sufficiency.

2. Secondly, Neither is the Question about the sufficiency of *external means as to all those to whom the Gospel is preached, and who have*

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the Scriptures; we grant a perfection in them, and that they are able to make men wise unto Salvation: the *word of Faith*, is a sufficient external means; this is again on all hands agreed betwixt us.

3. Thirdly, It is out of doubt, *that there is such a Revelation of the means of grace, as is sufficient for the manifestation of the Glory and Justice of God*, which is the great end which God aimeth at in all his dispensations of Providence.

4. Yea, and Fourthly, There is such a sufficiency of *outward means, as is enough to keep up external order, and discipline in the world, in humane Societies*; and as will render men *inexcusable* before God, *Rom.* 2. 1.

5. Lastly, We do grant that *there is a sufficiency of grace given to many that live in the world*, even to as many as God hath fore-ordained to eternal life: But still there are Two Questions behind.

1. Whether those who never heard of Christ, to whom the Gospel was never preached, have a sufficient external means in order to their Salvation?

2. Whether either those, or any of those to whom the Gospel is preached, have a sufficiency of means in order to their Salvation, unless God be pleased to influence their souls by the powerful operation of his Spirit upon their hearts, overpowering their wills, and in the day of his power making them willing to receive the Lord Jesus Christ freely tendred in the Gospel. We do judg, that as the Heathens, who have not heard of Christ, nor had the Gospel preached unto them, have not a sufficiency in respect of outward, ordinary means; so neither those who have the Scriptures, and Ordinances of God, have a *sufficiency of grace while they want the internal effectual operation of the Spirit of God*. So that indeed no Reprobates, only the *Elect of God*, have a *sufficient* aid and assistance of grace given them for their Salvation, though in the way of outward means; those indeed who have the Gospel published to them, may be said to have a *sufficiency* in respect of *external means*. This we affirm, upon these grounds.

1. This pretended sufficiency must be either of *External* means, or of *Internal means, or of both*: indeed it must be *of both, or it is not a sufficiency*. The External means is the holy Scriptures, and the *preaching of them*; they are those which are able to to make *the man of God*, (as Apostle tells us) *wise unto Salvation*: And *how shall they believe*, (saith the Apostle, Rom. 10.)

on him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a Preacher? And how shall they Preach except they be sent? The Apostle is there, discoursing of the ordinary means of Salvation: you see, that is fixed in the word, for that is, that which is to be *heard*, and the *Preaching of the word*. So that what secret way soever, God may have to reveal himself, and the knowledg of Christ, unto some particular persons, in places where the Scriptures are not found, nor the name of Christ heard of, nor his Gospel Preached; yet, certain it is, *the outward and ordinary means* of Salvation is the *Preaching*, *hearing*, and *reading of the word*, and the Ministry of the Gospel. Now we know, that in the far greatest part of the World, the Scriptures are not found, read, preached, they have no Ministry; and therefore it is very absurd to say, That as to the *External ordinary means of Salvation, there is a sufficiency afforded all*; for if the word, and the Ministry of it be the outward and ordinary, means; it is matter of demonstration, that a very great part of the World hath nothing of it: those therefore that will maintain a sufficiency of means, must make the *works of God*, and the *view of them*, and *conclusions*, which men may make by their Natural light and reason from them, a *sufficient means*, to give a man the knowledg of God, and such a knowledg as is sufficient. And this indeed some do seem to say, When they find out for us another object for saving Faith than Christ and his Gospel; and tell us, that *Abel and Enoch* excercised their Faith, and such a Faith as pleased God; whose object was not Christ, but only such Propositions as these, That God is, and *that he is a rewarder of them that seek him.* This is indeed a new Doctrine in our Nation, but it is but a Transcript, of what the *Socinians*, and *Arminians*, have long since said, That the *Gentiles* were saved by a *Faith in God*, believing, *That God is, and that he is a rewarder of those that seek him*: By a Faith only *apprehending things remote from humane sense* (as some amongst us Phrase it now, but translating *Bertius*) and after the same rate speak the *Socinians*, generally denying Faith in Christ *necessary to Salvation*, and making only *a Faith in God* necessary; but the Scripture telleth us, *That there is no other name under Heaven, by which a man can be saved, besides that of Jesus Christ; neither is there Salvation in any other.* But upon that *Hypothesis*, That the Preaching of the Gospel is the ordinary External means, it cannot.

V. *Bertium contra. Sibran. P.* 69. 70. 71.

Bertii discep. epist. 73. 76.

cannot be ſaid, That God hath given to all means ſufficient.

2. But Secondly, For the more *Spiritual Internal* means, which is the effectual grace of God, it is certain; that is not given to all, for then all would be ſaved, (but of that more, by and by.) There are thoſe that think every man hath a *ſufficiency* of *inward Spiritual means*, who liveth under the preaching of the Goſpel. The *Socinians*, in their known Catechiſm, propound this Queſtion. *Whether there be not a need of an inward gift of the Spirit, to inable us to believe the Goſpel?* They Anſwer; No. The ſame Song is ſung by *Smalcius*, *Socinus*, *Oſtorodius*, and the *Arminians*, generally ſay the ſame thing, the buſineſs is they make no more neceſſary, than a *moral Suaſion*; which all have to whom the Goſpel is preached; that ſuppoſed, they ſay, Man hath in his own will, a power to *believe*, *repent*, &c. But the Scripture tels us, It is given *to us on the behalf of Chriſt to believe*; That *Faith is not of our ſelves, it is the gift of God*; with a multitude of Texts more of the like import: now moſt certain it is, that if there be any ſuch operation of the Spirit neceſſary, all men have not a *ſufficiency of means*: If we be not ſufficient of our ſelves, to think one good thought, as the Apoſtle tells us: If without Chriſt, we can do nothing: If God muſt give to will and to do, what power hath man to any thing which is truly, and Spiritually good? For thoſe that ſit under the preaching of the Goſpel, they have all the ſame *moral Suaſion*; they have all the ſame rational powers, and faculties; how cometh it, I would fain know, to paſs, that one of them repents, and believeth, when others are hardned and continue lock't up in unbeleif? Is it from themſelves, that one mans will inclineth well, and not anothers? then ſurely there is another Principle of Spiritual life; another Fountain of good beſides God, which is plainly to contradict the Scripture, which every-where maketh God the Fountain of life, and of all good. But this is the firſt thing only which I offer to you, in this cauſe.

Confeſ. Rem. cap. 17. *Epiſcopius. diſp.* 46. *Colloq. Hag. P.* 258.

2. Secondly, How is it poſſible, that all ſhould have ſufficient grace, *but that all muſt be ſaved?* God telleth St. Paul, 2 Cor. 12. 9. *My grace ſhall be ſufficient for thee*; was it poſſible, after that promiſe, he ſhould have been overborne, or overcome with his temptation? I would ask for what this pretended grace, given to all ſhould be *ſufficient?* Will they ſay for Salvation?

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How can any be ſaid, to have a ſufficiency of grace to ſave them, who yet are not ſaved, nor ever ſhall be ſaved? All that can be pretended, is, That every man, and woman, hath a reaſonable Soul; (that is not denied) and *that is naturally endued, with power enough, to do whatſoever Spiritual action God hath required of man, in order to his obtaining Salvation*; having either the *works of God, to repreſent God unto him*; (which is all that the Heathen have) or *the word of God, the holy Scriptures, which they may read, and hear preached.* So that this ſame *ſufficient grace*, which they contend for, is nothing elſe but a *reaſonable Soul*: The *works of God in Nature*, *and the word of God in the Scriptures*; *or*, at moſt preached to them. Thoſe who reſtrain *ſufficiency of grace*, to thoſe who have the Goſpel preached to them, tell us plainly, *That the word preached*, is *the inſtrument, the conſummatory inſtrument of God for our Faith, converſion*, &c. And deny that in the buſineſs of converſion, the holy Spirit putteth forth any other power; and they ſay, There is more force in the word of Reconciliation, than in a *Lazare prodi, Lazarus* come forth: Well, but what ſhall become of the Heathen, who have not this word of Reconciliation? how have they a grace *ſufficient*? It cannot be deni[ed] but they have the *works of God*, ſufficient to convince t[hem] *That God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that ſeek him*; and they have reaſonable Souls, to make ſuch concluſions upon the proſpect of the works of God; and a *Faith in Chriſt as Mediator, is not*, they ſay, neceſſary to Salvation; for thus none could *believe in Chriſt, before he came* (if you will believe them.) *A Faith in God* as a ſupreme being, and as a rewarder of them that ſeek him, being ſufficient; eſpecially, conſidering that Faith is nothing elſe, but *an obedience* to *the commands of Chriſt*; and this is the very *form and eſſence of Faith*, *Socin. fragm. de Juſt. P.* 51. Now this muſt be underſtood, *ſo far as we* know them, and they are revealed to us. This was the old Doctrine of *Socinus*, and his followers; and in this ſence they ſay, Sufficient grace is given to all, in order to their Salvation, becauſe they believe nothing of what we call *grace*, viz. *A particular internal influence and operation of the holy Spirit, begetting in us a lively Faith in Jeſus Chriſt neceſſary to any*; but that every man hath a natural power to do all that God required of him, and may be ſaved if he will but uſe that power, to the uſe of which there needeth not any ſpecial influence

Grevinchovius, Con. Amef. 212. *Remonſtra. Colloq. Hag. P.* 258.

Socinus. in præfat. Theol. I. 17. *fol.* 93.

fluence of God: But man may be a God to himſelf, a principle of the greateſt good inclining his own heart, to that which is Spiritually good. For that God ſhould give unto any grace, ſufficient for his *Salvation*, and yet it ſhould not be effectual, is indeed a contradiction; for it muſt be *ſufficient, and inſufficient.*

3. Again, If there be ſuch a ſufficient grace granted to all; *It muſt be ſufficient*, either as a Phyſical, or *Natural cauſe*, or as a *Moral cauſe.* Phyſical cauſes, we know act neceſſarily. All that can be pretended, is, *a ſufficiency as a Moral cauſe.* Now certainly in the Goſpel, and the preaching of it, there is only a propoſition of things to be *believed*, and *done*, and arguments uſed to perſwade the *belief or doing of them*; the Queſtion ſtill is, *by what power it is, that a man doth believe*, and do? What is in the word written, propounded, in the word preached, ſo perſuaded, and argued? We ſay it is not of our ſelves, it is the *gift of God*; and it is given to them, *who believe, on the behalf of Chriſt to believe*, Phil. 1. 29. Now this means is not given unto all, the Habits are not infuſed from whence, as from their Roots, and Principles, theſe actions muſt proceed. To this they have nothing to ſay, but that theſe actings flow *from a Principle in mans will*; yet all men have the ſame reaſonable Souls: thus God *giveth Faith* and *Holineſs*, no more to *Paul*, than to *Judas.* The upſhot is therefore: *That there is in man a ſelf ſufficiency to his own Salvation*, and need not to be beholden to *Father, Son, or Holy Ghoſt for it*; being once brought forth into the World, and poſſeſſed of a reaſonable Soul, he hath a ſufficiency to his own Salvation, and may be a God unto himſelf: but it is not proper to call this means; we are otherwiſe taught from the Holy Scriptures, and therefore cannot agree it, That all men have an *auxilium ſufficiens*; a ſufficiency of grace, and gracious aſſiſtances in order to their obtaining Eternal life, and Salvation.

2. Queſt. But the Second Queſtion ſtill remains, viz. *How can God be juſt in the condemnation of any Sinner, to whom he hath not given a ſufficient aid, and aſſiſtance of grace, in order to his Salvation.* To this in my former diſcourſes, I have ſpoken ſufficiently. But yet I will ſpeak ſomething to it, here falling ſo fully in my way.

Anſw. 1. I anſwer firſt. God did give unto *Adam, ſuffici-*

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ent aids and assistances of Divine grace to have carried him, and all his posterity to Heaven. What was given unto him, was given to him, and his; to him as a publick Person, in whom we all were, and fell. *Arminians* stifly deny, That *Adam*, in his state of innocency had a power to believe in Christ, because (say they) *there was need of any Faith in Christ, in that estate, no: Episcopius* saith it is a silly Question, considering we make Faith a *Supernatural* habit; and such a one as in that state there was no need of. This is no better then trifling, and equivocating; surely all *habits of grace* since the fall, are Supernatural habits, we must be taught of God, to *love God*, and to *love one another*; to *fear God*, to *delight*, or to hope in him; had *Adam* therefore no such powers in his state of innocency think we? Further I would gladly know, whether *Adam had not a power in innocency to do whatsoever was necessary, in order to the obtaining of everlasting Salvation?* If God doth not give now to every man such a sufficiency of power, and Spiritual assistance; yet, he is just in the condemnation of Sinners: Man had such a sufficiency of power, and lost it; but God hath not lost his right to require the exercise of it, and to condemn Sinners for sin, though they now want it.

Arnoldus contra Mol. c. 6. Sect. 2. Episcopius disp. 5. thes. 6.

2. Especially considering, that God hath given unto all *such a sufficiency* of *external means*, *as is sufficient* to render them *without excuse*. This the Apostle expresly saith, *Rom.* 2. 1. But you will say, *If God hath not given to all a sufficiency of means, how shall man be without excuse: shall not one say, Lord! I never heard of Christ*, I never saw *thy Law, how should I believe on him of whom I never heard, how should I obey that Law which I never saw, nor heard of?* Again, shall not another say? *Lord, I did indeed hear of a Saviour, the Scripture I read, I heard, but I had no power to believe, I could not change my own heart, thou wouldst not change it; thou indeed, Lord, didst stand at the door of my heart, and knock, but thou didst never put in thy hand at the hole of the door.* I answer, these Sinners yet shall be inexcusable, because they walked not up to that light, and mercy, which God gave them. This is what the Apostle giveth in plea for God, concerning the Heathen, *Rom.* 1. 18, 21. *The wrath of God, saith he, is revealed against the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men*; for saith he, *That which may be known of God, is manifested in them, for God hath shewed it to them*, v. 21. *Because when they knew*

God,

God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but *became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkned.* It is true we say, the Heathens have not a light, shining amongst them, they have nothing, but the light of Nature to guide them, and this light maketh no discovery of Christ: but yet, the light shineth with them; a light which will shew them there is a God, and discover to them, that this God is *Eternal* and *powerful.* So that (saith the Apostle) *they are without excuse*, because, *that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations*; they improved not what light they had, nor became thankful for it, nor obedient to it. Christians are much more inexcusable, for besides that they have an equal share in Natural light, and have the same dictates of Natural conscience with others, there is much more of Christ, and his Gospel manifested to them. Christ telleth the *Jews*, *Mat.* 21. 32. That *John came unto them in a way of righteousness, and they believed not, but Publicans and Harlots believed in him, and you* (saith he) *when you had seen it repented not afterwards, that you might believe.* Christians have the preaching of the Gospel, the *preaching of Faith*, and of *repentance*, and they *repent not that they might believe*; you will say, but it is God that must give a power to repent, he gave unto Gentiles, *repentance unto life.* I answer, repentance is taken either more largely, or more strictly. More stricty it signifieth, the turning of the heart from all Sin unto God; this indeed is the work of God, he alone hath an hand upon the heart of man: but more largely it is taken for the turning from some sin, and the performance of external discipline: now as to this, the Lord denieth unto none a sufficiency of grace, and if men do not what in them lyeth, they are without excuse.

3. *Finally*, It is most certain, that God (whether he giveth sufficient grace to all, or no, *condemneth none but for sin.* I have shewed you at large, that a *sinners destruction* is of, and from himself as the meritorious cause. If indeed, God did either condemn any righteous person, or were any way obliged to give out effectual grace to all, and did not, this indeed would argue unrighteousness with God; but he doth neither of these, his wrath will indeed one day be revealed against them, to whom Christ and his Gospel were never revealed, to whom grace sufficient to bring them to Heaven, and Eternal

life was never given; but it shall never be revealed, but (as the Apostle saith) against the ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men: now certainly, God cannot be unrighteous in punishing *unrighteousness or ungodliness*. If God indeed were a debtor for his grace to his creature, he might be charged with unrighteousness, if he did not give it out; but he doth not deal out death and destruction, but as a wages, nor *Salvation*, and *Eternal life*, but as free gift? Who asketh a reason, why *August Cæsar*, did not bestow gifts upon all his Courtiers in proportion with those bestowed on *Mæcenas*? We may say of God as to all his dispensations of grace, *Placuit, hoc satis est; ubi non aliud jus aut ratio, ipsa voluntas jus & ratio est*; that is, It so pleased God, that is enough; where there is no other right or reason, the very will of God is Law, and reason enough: Besides, if the distributions of Divine grace were equal, how should God to any shew forth the *riches of his Grace*? Let me but acquaint you with a passage *of Augustine*, upon this Argument.

"Doest thou ask, (saith he) why grace is not given to all "according to desert? I answer, because God is merciful: "you will say, Why is not God merciful to all? I answer, "(saith he) because he is just. In this (saith he) that grace "is given freely, he sheweth what grace doth, and worketh in "those to whom it is given: Let us not therefore be un- "thankful to God, that according to the good pleasure of his "will, and for the praise of the glory of his grace; he hath "delivered us from so great a death, whereas if he should de- "liver none, yet, he would not be unjust.— Let him there- "fore who is delivered, love grace; let him who is not delivered, "acknowledg justice; if Divine goodness be understood in remitting "the debt, Justice also may be understood in exacting of it, "no way is there any iniquity found with God. But you will "say then, Why is there in the case of Infants, yea, of Twins "such a difference? Is it not (saith he) the like Question; "why in a diverse cause, there is the same judgment; and "the Workmen in the Vineyard, who wrought the whole day, "had but a Penny, as they had who had wrought but one hour? "The Case was different, the judgment the same; they mur- "mured, what saith the Master of the Vineyard to them, *Volo*. "I will make the last like unto the first. Thus because bounty "was shewed to some, there was no iniquity toward others,

"so

"so far as respecteth Justice, and Grace. As to the guilty "person that is saved, God saith, *I will*: As to others he "saith, Take what is thy own, and go thy way. I will give "unto this man, that which I do ow unto him: Is thine eye "evil, because mine is good? If he shall say, and why not "unto me? Here he shall hear, *Who art thou, who disputest "with God?* Whom thou findest as to one man a bountiful gi- "ver, as to another, a just exactor, as to none at all, unjust; for "whereas he should be just, if he should punish both; he that is sa- "ved, hath indeed reason to give thanks; he that is damned, "hath no cause to find fault.

I wish all those, who so talk of *Fathers*, would shew us, that they were the Children of this ancient Father, to whom that name is usefully given. But I come to the Application of this discourse.

1. *Use.* In the first place, let this *Caution* you, against an hasty listing your selves in the Number of those, who so cry up *Universal grace*, and a *sufficiency of the means of grace for all*, both the *means of purchase*, and of *Application*; I must confess it is a plausible point, and appears to us very pleasing, as well as reasonable, that God should not *punish* any, nor *condemn* any to whom he hath not given a sufficiency of *grace*, and assistances in order to their Salvation: but as smooth and plausible as it appeareth, take heed of too hasty imbracing it: it leadeth to strange notions in Divinity, as you may partly learn from this discourse; the maintaining, *ordinatam sufficientiam*, an ordained sufficiency (for we are not now speaking of the value of the merits of the blood of Christ in it self) in the Death of Christ, for all those who shall perish, as well as for those who shall be saved: it will lead you either to deny that Christ's death was any *purchase at all*, or to affirm, *that Christ purchased a possibility for some to be saved, but under an impossible condition*, (let it be Natural, or Moral, the absurdity is the same;) for so it must be, if there were an *Eternal Election*, or except man hath *a power of himself to repent, and believe*, &c. And the maintaining of a sufficiency of *grace*, given to all for the Application of Salvation, will lead you to maintain; That there is a Salvation, may be had without a Christ; That the Heathens may be saved, *by the light of Nature*; And that any Christians may be saved without

life was never given; but it ſhall never be revealed, but (as the Apoſtle ſaith) againſt the ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men: now certainly, God cannot be unrighteous in puniſhing *unrighteouſneſs or ungodlineſs*. If God indeed were a debtor for his grace to his creature, he might be charged with unrighteouſneſs, if he did not give it out; but he doth not deal out death and deſtruction, but as a wages, nor *Salvation*, and *Eternal life*, but as free gift? Who asketh a reaſon, why *Auguſt Cæſar*, did not beſtow gifts upon all his Courtiers in proportion with thoſe beſtowed on *Mæcenas*? We may ſay of God as to all his diſpenſations of grace, *Placuit, hoc ſatis eſt; ubi non aliud jus aut ratio, ipſa voluntas jus & ratio eſt*; that is, It ſo pleaſed God, that is enough; where there is no other right or reaſon, the very will of God is Law, and reaſon enough: Beſides, if the diſtributions of Divine grace were equal, how ſhould God to any ſhew forth the *riches of his Grace*? Let me but acquaint you with a paſſage *of Auguſtine*, upon this Argument.

"Doeſt thou ask, (ſaith he) why grace is not given to all "according to deſert? I anſwer, becauſe God is merciful: "you will ſay, Why is not God merciful to all? I anſwer, "(ſaith he) becauſe he is juſt. In this (ſaith he) that grace "is given freely, he ſheweth what grace doth, and worketh in "thoſe to whom it is given: Let us not therefore be un-"thankful to God, that according to the good pleaſure of his "will, and for the praiſe of the glory of his grace; he hath "delivered us from ſo great a death, whereas if he ſhould de-"liver none, yet, he would not be unjuſt.— Let him there-"fore who is delivered, love grace; let him who is not delivered, "acknowledg juſtice; if Divine goodneſs be underſtood in remitting "the debt, Juſtice alſo may be underſtood in exacting of it, "no way is there any iniquity found with God. But you will "ſay then, Why is there in the caſe of Infants, yea, of Twins "ſuch a difference? Is it not (ſaith he) the like Queſtion; "why in a diverſe cauſe, there is the ſame judgment; and "the Workmen in the Vineyard, who wrought the whole day, "had but a Penny, as they had who had wrought but one hour? "The Caſe was different, the judgment the ſame; they mur-"mured, what ſaith the Maſter of the Vineyard to them, *Volo*. "I will make the laſt like unto the firſt. Thus becauſe bounty "was ſhewed to ſome, there was no iniquity toward others,

"ſo

"so far as respecteth Justice, and Grace. As to the guilty "person that is saved, God saith, *I will*: As to others he "saith, Take what is thy own, and go thy way. I will give "unto this man, that which I do ow unto him: Is thine eye "evil, because mine is good? If he shall say, and why not "unto me? Here he shall hear, *Who art thou, who disputest "with God?* Whom thou findest as to one man a bountiful gi- "ver, as to another, a just exactor, as to none at all, unjust; for "whereas he should be just, if he should punish both; he that is sa- "ved, hath indeed reason to give thanks; he that is damned, "hath no cause to find fault.

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any ſpecial operation of the Spirit of grace, indeed without any *grace* at all, taken in a ſtrict, and proper ſence: Doctrines of that conſequence, that although it may be poſſible that thoſe who hold ſuch things may be ſaved, as having ſome further work of God upon their hearts, than they underſtand, and will own; yet, I fear it will be found impoſſible, that any who have taſted the grace of God no further, ſhould ever come in the Kingdom of God. Let not therefore the ſmoothneſs and plauſibility of ſuch notions in the ſound of them, deceive any of you; for it is but a ſound, and no more: And if the conſequences of thoſe notions be throughly conſidered, and examined, they will be found at laſt to bottome in ſuch ſtrange notions, and apprehenſions of the Nature of God, as do no way ſute the perfect nature of the Divine, and Supreme being, and what the Scripture revealeth concerning God; yea, and the very light of Nature, and natural reaſon will evince it to us, upon the Hypotheſis of Gods being the firſt and Supreme being, and the Fountain of all good; and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt's being Eternal God, and equal with the Father.

2. *Uſe.* This diſcourſe calleth once more aloud unto all, *To walk up to the light which they have.* Though we deny, that God giveth unto all, yea, that he giveth to any (unleſs ſuch as are ordained unto life) a ſufficiency of grace, and gracious aſſiſtances in order to their eternal Salvation; yet we ſay, God granteth to all, though in very different degrees, ſome means. The very Heathens have ſomething of God manifeſted to them, and manifeſted in them: *For the inviſible things of God,* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *are manifeſted by the things that are made, even his eternal power, and Godhead:* they have *natural light,* and a *natural reaſon,* and ſomething of a natural conſcience too. The works of *Creation they have,* and the *works of Providence,* ſhewing them a great deal of the eternal power and God-head of God; ſufficient to convince them that there is a *God,* a *Great, Infinite, Powerful God*; for he leaveth not *men without witneſs,* giving the very Heathens *fruitful times and ſeaſons.* But I am not ſpeaking unto Heathens, you that are Chriſtians have yet further means, though in different degrees too. All have the Scriptures, Proteſtants have them in their own Language, ſo as they may read, and in a great meaſure underſtand what they read; all have the Miniſtry of the Word, they have the Goſpel preached to them; though it is true, that alſo is in very diffe-

different degrees; yet all have something of what they call a moral Season, and are perswaded, and intreated to turn unto God. This we say, is not a *sufficient means* to bring a Soul unto Heaven: if God doth not more for Souls, than let them have the benefit of the works of Creation, shewing them his glory, and the benefit of the light of Nature and Reason, and the works of his common Providence; yea, and of the Scriptures, and the preaching of them; and that not only in a cold, flat, and dead, and dull manner, but in the most lively, powerful manner; they will never *repent*, never *believe*, and *turn unto God*: *Paul may plant*, and *Apollo* may water long enough, if God doth not give the increase. It is not in him that Preacheth, and perswadeth, nor in him that Prayeth, and heareth, but in God that sheweth mercy; he must give both *to will*, and *to do*; he must give repentance unto life, and be both the *Author*, and the *finisher of our Faith*. But yet I say, all these are means, some of them very great and excellent means; and the highest in the order of external means: And though they be not sufficient, though used with the best natural improvements of our own will, and power, to bring us to Heaven; yet sufficient to render us without excuse unto God, if we do not make a due, and just improvement of them. Let me therefore plead with you, that you would live up to the means of grace which God giveth you. That sort of people amongst us, whom we call *Quakers*, call to men to *Hearken to the light within them*: I do not well understand what they mean by the *light within us*; but thus much is certain, that all men have *a light within them*, and *they have a light without them*. The light without them is the *light of the works of God in Nature*, and *of his works of Providence*; *The Scriptures*, *and the Ministry of the Word*: all men have some, or other, or all of these. All men have also a light *within them*, the *light of Nature*, and of *Reason*: This light (as I have shewed you) is not sufficient to shew a man the way to Heaven, but it is enough to shew a man *much of God*, and much of his duty; and the way to obtain a full and sufficient light, to bring him to glory, is for him to walk up to the light which he hath: This will be *the condemnatoin*, *that when light is come into the world*, *men love darkness more than light*, *because their hearts*, *because their deeds are evil*. But to shut up this Discourse.

3. *Use.* In the last place, What an obligation doth this lay upon the children of God, to cry out with holy *David*, *Bless the Lord*,

Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me, bleſs his holy name. Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and ſing of all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquity, and healeth all thy diſeaſes. Who redeemeth thy life from deſtruction, and crowneth thee with lovingkindneſs, and tender mercy. To heighten your ſouls apprehenſions of the Divine goodneſs extended to you, and raiſe up your hearts in the high praiſes of God, I ſhall but offer Two things to your Meditation, with which I ſhall ſhut up this Diſcourſe.

1. Conſider, *What is done unto you.* God hath undoubtedly given unto you *a ſufficient grace*: The ſufficiency loſt in *Adam*, is reſtored to you by the Lords giving Chriſt to you; *I can do all things*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) *through Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth me.* So that God may ſay to you, (as to his Vineyard, *Iſa.* 5. *What could I have done more for my Vineyard, than I have done?*) What could I have done more for ſuch a ſoul, than I have done? God hath diſplay'd the riches of his grace upon your ſouls. God could do no more for you than he hath done. God hath nothing more to give, than grace and glory; he hath given you *grace*, ſpecial, *diſtinguiſhing grace*: Glory is hereafter to be revealed, in the mean time ſpecial effectual grace is glory begun.

2. Conſider, Secondly, *Why to you?* to you rather than unto others; others may eaſily underſtand, *Why not to them?* becauſe they deſpiſed the riches of his Grace, they ſinned againſt their natural light, they lived not up to their light of Revelation. But *Why to you?* Did not you alſo ſin againſt your light? Did you make that improvement of the works of God, the light of your natural Reaſon, or Conſcience that you ought to have done? If not, Why hath God done more for you, than for them; diſcovered more of Chriſt unto you, than unto them? Here you will be loſt, and at laſt be forced to reſolve it into this; God hath ſhewed me mercy, becauſe he would ſhew me mercy, and hath extended compaſſion to me, only becauſe he would extend compaſſion. Oh ſit down alone ſometimes, and ſay, *My ſoul*, Why ſhould the God of grace ſhew mercy unto thee? Haſt thou not ſinned often againſt the very light of Nature, and Reaſon? Haſt thou not *deſpiſed the Goſpel of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and trampled under foot the blood of the Son of God? What high praiſes of God, are high enough for every true believers heart? How *precious ſhould Chriſt be unto his ſoul?* How can he ever have thoughts of God high enough, or with his tongue ſing the praiſes of God loud enough?

How

How doth he stand concerned to cry out with *David*, *Awake my glory?* Oh! What manner of person should a believer be in *all holiness of conversation?* He can certainly never do enough for that God, who hath done so much for him, and hath made such a difference betwixt him, and others: This is praising of God, not in word and in tongue only, but indeed, and in truth: Oh this is to *perfect holiness*! It is for that God who hath from eternity chosen you to obtain everlasting life, and hath left others to perish in their iniquity; for that God who in the dispensations of his gracious Providence, in the execution of that purpose, hath given his Son for you, to purchase a certainty of Salvation for your Souls: who hath sent the Ministers of his Gospel to you, publishing this Salvation by Christ, when others never heard of the Gospel; nay, who hath done much more than this, when others sate under the Gospel, and their hearts were never wrought upon by the preaching of it; God hath especially changed, and wrought upon your hearts, and conquered your souls into the obedience of his Gospel. I shall conclude with that of the Psalmist, *Psal.* 107. 1, 2. *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.*

SERMON LII.

Rom. 11. 33.

— His ways past finding out.

I Have (as you know) in this Discourse, formerly made use of this Text to found a Proposition upon, concerning the *unsearchableness of the ways of Divine Providence*, (for of those ways it is, that this Text speaketh) *I beheld*, (saith *Solomon* Eccl. 8. 17.) *all the works of God, that a man cannot find out the ways of God which are done under the Sun, yea, though a man*

man labour to find it out, yet he shall not find it, yea, though a wise man think to know it, yet he shall not find it. I have shewed you that the ways of Divine Providence cannot be found out, 1. *As to the Compass and Latitude of them.* 2. *As to the Tendencies of them.* 3. *As to the Method and Tract of them.* 4. *As to the Indication of them.* 5. Lastly, *As to the Reason of them.* This is as true, with reference to the motions of *special* and *effectual grace*, as to the *workings of Providence*, in its more ordinary and common motions, relating to the affairs of the World. Now one of the Reasons why the ways of the Lord cannot be found out, is because he doth not always tread the same steps. God doth not always do the same work in the same method: and this is true as to the motions of Providence, in the distribution of *special grace*, as well as with reference to its *motions*, respecting the affairs of this life. I shall not pretend to find out these depths, I shall only Discourse some of these distributions, so far as to shew you, that they are reasonable motions. I shall first Discourse shortly *concerning the works of Divine Providence, in the bringing home of Souls unto himself*, in the work of *Conversion* and *Regeneration.*

2. Secondly, *In Gods carrying on of his work in the souls of his Saints*, thereby preparing, and *making them meet for the Inheritance of light.*

That which I intend at this time to speak to, is the variety of Gods ways *in bringing home souls to himself*: Even there the way of God is like the way of an *Eagle* in the Air, a *Serpent* on a Rock, and a *Ship* on the Sea, which can none of them be trackt, nor found out in the methods of their motions. *God in the Converting of souls unto himself, doth not keep an uniform motion*, nor tread certain steps; but sometimes he worketh one way, sometimes another; sometimes by one means, sometimes by another. For some order in this Discourse, I shall Discourse,

1. *Concerning the varieties of Divine Providence in the Conversion of souls.*

2. *What reasonable account may be given of that variety of Gods motions in this thing.*

3. *What practical conclusions may be drawn from hence, or inferred upon this Discourse.* I begin with the first of these.

Quest. 1. *What varieties of Divine Providence are observable in this great work of changing hearts, and the Conversion of souls unto God?*

The truth is, there are some that will understand none at all; poor

poor souls, they will understand no other *Conversion*, nor *Regeneration*; but in *Baptism*; every one that is *Baptized*, is *Regenerated*. There was indeed such a thing as Conversion, when the world was all *Jews* and *Heathens*; and to be brought to imbrace the Doctrine of the Gospel: But for any such thing, as the *turning the heart from sin unto God*, this they understood not; and indeed by their lives, one would judg they did not. But I am speaking to those, whom I believe taught better things, and who believe other things; surely *conversion*, or *turning from Idols*, and *erronious Opinions*, is not all that we read in Scripture of *the change of the heart*, and *turning unto God*: But in the *Converting of sinners*, you shall observe a great variety, chiefly remarkable in Three things.

1. *As to the time, the particular time of mans life, when God is pleased to call home souls unto himself*; some in their youth, some in their age, &c.

2. *As to the External means, which God maketh use of in this work.*

3. *As to the manner of Gods dealing with souls, in the Converting, Regenerating, and bringing home souls unto himself.*

1. First, *As to the time.* This our blessed Lord excellently setteth out to us in that Parable, *Mat.* 20. Where he telleth us: *That the Kingdom of heaven is like unto an housholder, who went out early to find out labourers, whom he might send into his Vineyard*; some he called *early* in the morning, some about the *sixth hour*, some about the *ninth hour*, some at the *eleventh hour*; he called them in at several hours. The Kingdom of God is the *Church of God*, which properly consisteth only of such as are *Saints* by *effectual-calling*; though others that are *visibly and professionally* such, have that denomination, being mixed with others, who are the true members of the Lord Jesus Christ. Gods calling men into his Vineyard, is his adding *to the number of such as shall be saved.* Now God calleth some early in their youth, some in their middle-age, some (but very few) in their old age; some even at their dying hour, though of them there be, of all, the rarest examples. As God had *Nazarites* from the womb, so he sanctifieth some from the womb; *Samuel* was from the very womb Dedicated to God, and accepted of God. God telleth *Jeremiah*, Jer. 1.5. That *before he came out of the womb, he sanctified him.* I am a-ware, that *Sanctifying* in that Text may be taken in another sense, as it signifieth a *Separation to the Office of a Prophet*; and so it may be un-

derstood to be interpreted by the following words; and *ordained thee to be a Prophet*: but why it should be limited to that sense, I do not understand. St. *Paul* saith, *He was separated from his Mothers womb, and called by his grace*: but there *separating* must be understood of Gods design and purpose, for we know *Paul* was a *blasphemer*, a *persecutor*. But certain it is, that God calleth some very young; *Timothy, from a child, was acquainted with the Scriptures*. *Josiah*, 2 Chron. 34. 1, 2. *at eight years old began to reign*, and ver. 2. *did that which was right in the sight of the Lord*; and ver. 3. at sixteen years of age he set upon his *famous reformation*. It is said of *Abijam*, the young Son of *Jeroboam*, that he only of the house of *Jeroboam*, went to his grave in peace, *because there was some good thing found in him*. Sometimes, and most ordinarily, God worketh upon peoples hearts in their riper state, of which are the most plentiful instances in Scripture. You read of the *thief upon the Cross*, *converted in the last day of his life*: and what we find in Scripture, we find God still doing in the dispensations of his Providence. The age in which we have lived, hath afforded many instances of *children*, whose hearts we may charitably judg, from the accounts we have had of them, God had in their very childhood Regenerated, and Sanctified them. Blessed be God, we are not without some instances of persons, and those not a few, whom God hath wrought upon in their more adult estate, and some also in their old age; though Examples of that still are, and ever were very rare. This is the first variety, obvious to every Eye.

2. A second variety observable, is in the means which *God is pleased to make use of*: For these God never *tied himself to the same means*. The preaching of the Gospel, was always made use of by God, as the most ordinary means: It was, at the *preaching* of *Peter*, that *Three Thousand Souls* were in one day converted; and the Apostle telleth us, that it pleased God by the *foolishness of Preaching to save them that believed*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 21. And the Apostle tells us, that *faith cometh by hearing*, and *hearing by the word of God*. But yet, God hath made use (though more rarely) of other *means*: the means which God first used to the *Eunuch*, seems to be his *reading* in *the Prophet Isaiah*. Sometimes God made use of *Providences*: you read of many converted, and induced to believe in Christ, upon the acccount of his *Miracles*; and still God is pleased to use the same variety of means.

Gener-

Generally indeed, God maketh use of the preaching of the Gospel; sometimes he sanctifieth the reading of the word; sometimes he maketh use of Providences. I think, I have sometimes read concerning *Waldus*, the Father of those ancient *Protestants*, called the *Waldenses*, that the seeing of one of his companions suddenly drop down dead, was the first means of his conversion; we read of a *great dread* that fell upon People, upon the sudden death of *Ananias*, and *Saphirah*. My self have known one that would acknowledg, that his hearing of *Bells* Ring for persons dead, was a great means to beget serious thoughts in him, First, of turning unto God. It pleased God to make use of *Manasses* his Chains, to turn his heart; and the imprisonment of *Paul*, *Acts* 16. to convert the Goaler, and his whole Family. Sometimes God useth the instructions of Parents; sometimes one means, sometimes another, as it pleaseth him.

3. A third observable variety, respecteth, *The manner of Gods working upon Souls*. It is true, in some (especially two) respects God dealeth a-like withal.

1. *He forceth no Soul*, he indeed maketh *it willing*, and giveth *to will*; but the Soul in its conversion to God, moveth willingly, and freely.

2. Secondly, He putteth forth an *Almighty power*, *as to every Soul that is converted*. The Soul is *made willing*, but it is *in the day of the Lords power*, Psal. 110. 3. But yet the effects of this power are not always the same; all are not drawn in the like manner, some are drawn by a *Silken Thred*; others by *Iron-Fetters*: some God works upon in a more rough way, some in a more soft, and gentle way. Some are a little, or not at all under the *Spirit of bondage*: others are *Months*, and *Years* under it; they are filled with the Lords terrors, and cry unto him *out of the belly of Hell*, before he heareth them: some are drawn with the Cords of love only, others with the Chains of fears. Some are as it were insensibly drawn, and the Spirit of God as it were, slippeth into their Souls without any noise; they become Temples of the Holy Ghost, and there is neither the noise of Ax, nor Hammer heard about the Spiritual building; others are terrified like the *Jaylor*, *Acts* 16. cast down to the Earth like *Paul*, both in order to conversion, and their reception of *converting Grace*.

2. Secondly, You shall observe; *That God* sometimes *makes his way to the heart by the head, sometimes*, he begins at *the heart, and by that maketh his way to the head:* my meaning is, sometimes God begins his work upon knowing persons, who have been *Catechised out of the Law*, and from Children have *had a knowledg of the Holy Scriptures*, sanctifying their first Principles to them, and reflecting upon their Hearts and Consciences, the notions of truth, which they have been bred up in, the *Holy Spirit* bringing to their *remembrance*, what of God they have formerly heard from Ministers, Parents, or Governours. As to others, God maketh his way *from the heart, to the head.* They have great degrees of ignorance, as to the truths of God; but God blesseth his word so far, as that they can apprehend, they are in a lost condition, and must look for another righteousness besides their own, and take up a new course of life; they hear of a Saviour come into the World, of a fulness in him, and a readiness to save unto the utmost, those who by faith come unto him: this makes them to *inquire, return and come*, to seek for Spiritual knowledg *as for Silver*, and *to dig for it, as for hidden treasure*, and by *following on to know the Lord*, they came to know him. But this is enough to have hinted you, as to the varieties to be observed in Gods methods, of working in the conversion of Souls. Let me in the next place shew the reasonableness of the Divine workings in this great work.

1. And first as to the *variety observed in point of time:*

1. Some are converted young. Possibly God may do it, *that he may Crown the indeavours of Parents, & Governours, and thereby engage others to take care of the Souls of their Correlations committed to their charge.* Some Parents are very solicitous for the Spiritual good of their children, whetting upon them their lost condition by Nature, often minding them of Eternity, and calling upon them, to remember their Creator in the days of their youth; now where any will do this, God takes notice of it, and will often Crown those Domestick labours with a desired success; for the encouragement of others, God gives in to their prayers, the Souls of their Children oft-times, while yet they are Children. It is said of *Monica*, the Mother of *Augustine*, that she was a woman of *many* tears, and prayers for her Son; and *Ambrose* was wont to comfort her, telling her *that it was impossible, that a Child of so many tears should perish.* It is not impossible indeed that some should perish, who have been

been Children of many tears, and prayers, for whom *godly Mothers* have travailed in pain again, till Chriſt ſhould be formed in them: there is no merit in our prayers, and tears, neither hath God made us any promiſe, that he will convert, and Eternally ſave all our Children, on whoſe behalf we labour and wreſtle with God; but as *Hannah* obtained *her Child by Prayer*, upon which account it was, that ſhe named him *Samuel, Beg'd of God*; ſo I doubt not but that there are many good Parents, that by *Prayer* have from God obtained the *Converſion, and Regeneration* of their Children; and that *early*, that the Lord might as it were ſhew them, that he gave in the Souls of their Children to their prayers, and their godly inſtructions, exhortations, reproofs, catechizing, &c. If we ſhould never ſee grace appearing in tender years, we ſhould conclude it in vain, during thoſe years, to uſe any means with them, tending to ſuch an end. The Apoſtle telleth *Timothy*, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15. *That from a Child he had known the Scriptures*; and 2 *Tim.* 1. 5. He mentioneth *an unfained faith that* was both in his Grandmother *Lois*, and in his *Mother Eunice*, and he was *perſwaded in him alſo*, in him (doubtleſs in great meaſure by their means.) God honouring their labours with the converſion of *Timothy*.

2. Secondly, *Poſſibly God doth intend ſome elect veſſels of his no long time in the World.* God intended *Abijam* the Son *Jeroboam*, but a ſhort time in the World, and therefore there was early found in him ſome good thing. I obſerved that amongſt all the Patriarchs, which are reckoned up, *Gen.* 5. He of them who (before *Enos*) lived the ſhorteſt time, lived 895 years, the reſt lived longer, only *Enoch* lived but 365, about a third part of the time of the other. It is ſaid, *He walked with God, and was not, for God took him*; and we ſee this of times in our experience, God taketh away thoſe in their youth, whom he calleth in their Childhood and youth. You have an obſervation, that *beautiful Children*, or Children of *compoſed ſerious countenances*, (when very young) or ſuch as being very young are very toward, and fond of their Books, ſeldome live long; how true that is I cannot ſay, but you ſhall (I believe) more certainly obſerve it of ſuch who earlily have their hearts changed, and are converted unto God. God ſetteth thoſe to work young, to whom he hath not appointed long time to work; of all whom God hath given unto Chriſt, he muſt loſe none; and though Infants elect, are ſaved upon the Covenant of grace, before it appeareth to the World, that they have laid hold upon it, or are in a capacity in order

to

to it, to exercise their reason; yet, that is not Gods usual way: where he alloweth to any a longer life, till they come to exercise their reason, he expecteth they should keep the ordinary road to Heaven, by repentance and faith, and in order to this he worketh upon their hearts betimes, giving them repentance unto life, and faith to lay hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Thirdly, *Possibly God doth intend some a longer time in the World, but hath designed them for some great and eminent service in it*; such the Lord useth to call betimes. I will shew it you in two or three eminent instances. The first is that of *Samuel*. *Samuel* was to be a *great Prophet*, yea, and a *Judge in Israel*; God accordingly betimes took him unto his more special tutorage: he was designed by his Mother, and from the very time of his *weaning*, *by her* dedicated unto the Lord; and the Lord while he was yet a Child, eminently communicated his mind to him; as you read in the story, 1 *Sam.* 2. 3. chap. *Josiah* was a Second. God had designed him for a great and eminent service, he was Propheſied of many years before he was born, and that by name, as who should work a great and eminent Reformation, and he did do that. God earlily prepares him for it, he was but 8 years old when he began to reign, and he began to seek the Lord God of his Fathers; and when was but 16 years of age, he began a work of Reformation, of a long and most grosly corrupted state. *Timothy* is a third. God had designed him for an *Evangelist*, to have a great hand in settling the Gospel-Church. God called him very young, *from a Child he knew the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make the man of God wise unto Salvation.* To these I may add an instance of an eminent Prince in our own Nation. King *Edward the Sixth*, who laid the first Principles of our reformation; (King *Henry* the 8th. did little, and what he did seemed rather to be out of interest so biassing him, than otherwise) God was pleased in his very young and tender years, to seize upon his heart. He had intended him (as the event proved) but a short life, and he had laid out for him a very great work, to purge such an *Augean* Stable, as the Popish rabble had left. Two observations I have made upon reading the Scripture. 1. *That when God had long kept some women his servants barren, they ordinarily proved the Mothers of very eminent Children.* *Rachel*, *Manoahs wife*, *Hanna*, and *Elizabeth*, are instances of that. 2. That *God very often when he designed Persons for some eminent work, prepared them for it, by an early seizing upon their hearts*, and sanctifying them from the Womb unto himself. And this will

appear

appear to you very reaſonable upon a double account.

1. *Thoſe which do a great deal of work for God, muſt have a great deal of time to do it in.* All humane actions you know require time, and a proportion of time according to the work.

2. *Thoſe who are to excel in work muſt not be much blotted in their previous converſation.* *Jacob* in his bleſſing of *Reuben*, *Gen.* 49.v.4. hath this expreſſion, *Reuben ſhall not excel, becauſe he went up unto his Fathers bed, he went up unto my Couch.* God ſeldome alloweth any one eminently to excel, whoſe youth hath been ſtained with many eminent and notorious blots; they may come to Heaven upon their converſion, but they ſhall not *excel in the world.* I can think but of one inſtance in Scripture to the contrary, which is that of *Saul*, he was a *perſecutor* (himſelf telleth us) and a *blaſphemer*, yet *received to mercy*; but he ſaith, it was becauſe *he did it ignorantly.* St. *Paul*'s *perſecution* was not rooted in a malice againſt godlineſs, and holineſs, but in an *error of judgment:* he ſaith of himſelf, that *he verily thought, that he ought to do many things againſt Jeſus of Nazareth.* There is a great deal of difference betwixt ſcandalous ſinners: one man *is prophane, and a perſecutor only by a miſtake*, another man is ſo *by principle.* St. *Paul* was of the former ſort: 'tis true, he was a prophane, and miſchievous perſecutor, a prophane blaſphemer; but it was *by a miſtake*, not that he had any prejudice, or ill Opinion of the *ways of holineſs*, which Chriſts Doctrine led to; for he was never, that we read of, *ſcandalous* in thoſe things which *the light of Nature, Reaſon*, or the *Law of Moſes* required, or forbad; but only as to the *matters of the Goſpel*, which his Country-men did not own, eſpecially thoſe who had Educated him; for after *the ſtricteſt Sect of Religion amongſt the Jews*, he liv'd a *Phariſee*; ſo that his *ſcandalous* actions were bottomed only upon a miſtake. But others now are *prophane by a principle*: What *principle*? not a principle of error in the underſtanding, not rightly conceiving of the truths of God: But a principle of *malice and hatred in the will and affections, to any thing which croſſeth their luſts*; they hate the image of God where-ever they ſee it; they would have the *ſtrait-gate* wide enough for *Drunkards*, *Adulterers*, *Sabbath-breakers*, *Lyers*, all ſorts of ſinners againſt the very light of Nature and Reaſon, and the moſt indiſputed Texts of Scriptures, to enter in, and perſecute all thoſe who oppoſe them in this thing; (a ſin under the Goſpel very near to, if not the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt) you never read of one of theſe converted. Now theſe and ſuch-like other prophane perſons,

sons, are not only *scandalous* in the Eyes of Gods people, but in the *Eyes of the men of the world*: and although God sometimes changeth the hearts of debauched, and prophane persons, (though seldom the hearts of persecutors from this principle) yet he rarely suffers them to excel, or to be in any eminent station, or of any remarkable note in his Church: when-as therefore he designeth any soul to any eminent station, or place in his Church, or to do him any eminent service in any civil state, the Providence of God ordinarily seizeth upon their hearts in their youth, and keepeth them from those debaucheries in their life, as may expose them to the *obloquie* of the world; and make them say, *Is Saul also amongst the Prophets?* For a former prophane, and notoriously scandalous life, would much hinder that reputation of theirs in the eye of the world; which is necessary in a rational way, to make what they shall afterwards say, and do for God, acceptable unto the world. Hence it is that you shall observe, that *Ministers*, if they be leud in their lives, seldom or never do any good in their places, *Ducimur præceptis, trahimur exemplis*; they are reasonably judged but to act a part, who call men to holiness, and live unholily themselves: every one is ready to say to them, *Physician, heal thy self*, and to say within themselves, If these men did in very deed believe what they talk to us, they would not themselves live contrary to what they teach: And although a converted soul (who hath formerly been prophane) doth not so, yet his former life is a wound upon his honour and reputation, which is of great concern to those, to whom he preacheth. God therefore ordinarily where he designeth a person for an eminent station, or work, doth prepare him for it, seizing him when young for himself.

4. Fourthly, God calleth some in their old age, at their very last hour; *That there may be no room left for any soul to despair of Divine grace.* It was *Augustines* Observation of old, *He called one, that none might despair, and but one, that none might presume.* God calleth men into his Vineyard, some of them at the *eleventh hour*, that the oldest sinners might have hope; that the most decrepit sinner might not say, *I am a dry tree*, it is too late for me to think of repenting, and turning unto God: yea, indeed God may be conceived for this reason, to call some at all hours; some at the *sixth*, some at the *nineth*, some at the *eleventh hour*; that sinners in all the periods of their lives might have hope, and some grounds of incouragement to turn unto God, when they see, that at all hours,

hours, ſome have been converted, and turned unto God, and have found favour with him. But this is enough to have ſpoken, to have ſhewn you the reaſon of the variety which the Providence of God ſhews us, as to this his firſt work, of converſion and bringing home ſouls with reſpect to time. Let us now a little conſider the reaſonableneſs of the *Providence of God*, making uſe of a variety of External means; moſt ordinarily (I told you) he maketh uſe of the *publick preaching of the Goſpel.* Thus you read of moſt in Scripture converted, ſometimes of the private inſtruction of friends: Thus when *John the Baptiſt*'s preaching, had been bleſſed to ſend Two of his Diſciples unto Chriſt; *Andrew* being one, he brings *Peter* his Brother; and when Chriſt had found *Philip*, *Philip* was an inſtrument to bring *Nathaniel*; and the woman of *Samaria*, *Joh.* 5. was an inſtrument to commend Chriſt to thoſe of her City, though indeed, when they came to hear and ſee Chriſt, they told her, That now they believed, not ſo much for what ſhe had told them, as for what themſelves had *heard*, and *ſeen*; and ſometimes God maketh uſe of other Providences, as I have more largely ſhewed you in my former Diſcourſe. Now this is very reaſonable,

1. That God *may honour his own Ordinances.* He hath appointed the *fooliſhneſs of preaching for the ſalvation of the Elect.* He hath ſaid, *Hear, and your ſouls ſhall live.* He hath told us, that *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:* and hath told us, *How ſhall they believe, on him of whom they have not heard, and how ſhall they hear, without a preacher, or preach except they be ſent?* It is but reaſonable therefore, that God having ſet up ſuch an Ordinance as *Preaching*, and eſtabliſhed ſuch an order of Officers in his Church, as that of *Paſtors* and *Teachers*, ſhould in the ordinary, and moſt uſual courſe of his Providence, concur with it, and bleſs it, and the labours of thoſe, who are employ'd in it, to the converſion and bringing home of ſouls: He hath ſaid of old, *Whereſoever I record my name to dwel*, there I will *meet my people and bleſs them.* Gods name is ſtamped upon the Ordinance *of Preaching*; he hath Commiſſionated his Miniſters, to *go, Preach, and Baptize*; he hath told them, that *he will be with them to the end of the world.* God muſt honour his own Inſtitution, and give a being to his own word.

2. Yet ſecondly, It is alſo reaſonable that we ſhould underſtand, *That God is not tyed up to any means*, and know, that *Converſion*

version is Gods work, not a Ministers; Paul may plant, and *Apollos may water,* but *God must give the increase:* now this would not be understood, if God never used any other means than the preaching of Ministers to convert souls. God will therefore sometimes work immediately, sometimes by different means; *Reading the word;* (as in the case of the *Eunuch*) the *counsels, reproofs,* and *exhortations* of others, as in the case of *Peter,* and *Nathaniel*: *Afflictions,* as in the case of *Manasses*; *Miracles,* as in the case of many, of whom you read in the Gospel, that they were converted; to let us see, that God, although he useth means, yet is not limited to them.

3. Thirdly, God may be conceived to use the means of *private instructions, and counsels for the incouragement of all persons, set in relation to others, to a faithful performance of their duties, and a watching over, and for souls committed to their trusts.* It discourageth all sorts of labours, when we see nothing of that fruit from it, which we expected, or intended. But of this, I have spoke before.

Further yet, to shew you the *reasonableness* of the variety of Providence in the manner of converting, and bringing home of souls unto himself, I noted it to you in Two things.

1. *God sometimes makes his way by the head, to the heart; sometimes by the heart, to the head.* This appears exceeding reasonable.

1. *That God may commend knowledg of spiritual things to us, and* (as I said before) *encourage duty.* We are persons whose understandings are pittifully imperfect in the things of God, and are very prone to take up false notions and measures; and because the influx and operation of the Spirit of God, is by all men (of sound judgment in the things of God) determined necessary to conversion, we are apt to think that we have nothing to do with our children, and servants, but only to wait until God shall *move the waters,* (I mean change their hearts) and all Instruction and Catechising is needless; and that bringing up youth to a knowledg of the form of sound words, is only to learn them to be Hypocrites, &c. God therefore to shew us the advantage of spiritual knowledg, and to mind us of, and encourage us to our spiritual duty, is pleased sometimes to make his way to the head, by the heart; reflecting the notions of truth, which have been instilled into us while we are young upon our consciences, making that knowledg instrumental to our conversion, and eternal Salvation; and so letting the governours of others know, that they have not laboured in vain with the souls committed to their charge.

2. On

2. On the other side, God sometimes *making his way by the heart to the head*, making impressions upon the hearts of some poor blind ignorant Souls, and setting them on work *to inquire after Salvation*; *lets us know that the conversion of a Sinner is a work of grace, and divine power*, not a meer *rational effect* of notions imprinted upon the understanding, nor of *moral Suasion*, (alas these poor creatures possibly are not fit objects for such a thing;) but the finger of God is in it, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and turneth them as it pleaseth him: thus by this variety of his Providence, he doth both *honour his own ordinance*, and shew the profit, and usefulness of means, and also the mighty power that is put forth, in the changing of the heart by effectual grace, both which it is necessary the World should be convinced of. And this is enough for a reasonable account of the second variety.

The last variety which I observed, was *Gods keeping some Souls a longer time under the Spirit of bondage than others.* Some he is pleased to draw to himself more *sweetly*, rather by *arguments of love*, than *terrors and arguments* of wrath; others he is pleased more to fill *with terrors*, yea, and to keep their Souls a long time under them: and this we find by experience, is oftimes matter of some trouble to others, whom God hath dealt more gently with; they begin to doubt and suspect whether God hath wrought any real change in them, because they have not been in the *belly of Hell*, as others have been: now there may be a reasonable account also given of this difference, though we must not pretend to find out the bottome of the Divine counsels in this dispensation of his Providence.

I shall say little of the *difference of Natural complexions and constitutions*, which is not inconsiderable in this case. He is little read in men and women in the World, who doth not observe, that as in the earth, (of which man is made) there is a great difference of Soil, that one Soil doth more easily suck up a showre of Rain, and digest it, than others. So in man there are some complexions that are far more tenacious of *grief*, and impressive by fear, than others are; (such are chiefly *Melancholick*, and some *Flegmatick complextons.*) Now it is true, God in his work of conversion, could cure this, but he ordinarily doth not work miraculously; and where God begins a work upon the Souls of any who have bodies, which they inform of these sad, and dark constitutions, it is not at all to be wondered, (they being Naturally more prone to fears, and jealousies, to doubts and suspicions, and more tenacious of grief, and sorrow,) if by the working, the Natural working of these

passions, to which their Natural complexion, and constitution, more fully subjecteth them, if they be longer *under the Spirit of bondage, than others.* You will see at the same case with them in other things exciting those passions, and unless you would suppose, that God in the conversion of such, should work miraculously, and alter their natural complexion, and constitution, it is not reasonable to suppose that it should be othertwise, it is but according to the natural workings of their Spirits, who can get off no occasions of sorrow and trouble, so soon as others can, who are of more airy, & chearly constitutions.

2. But a Second reason of this variety, may reasonably be conceived to arise *from a difference of guilt.* It is true, every sin deserved the Eternal, and utmost wrath of God. Every sin is against an infinite God, and hath a kind of infinity, and unmeasurableness of guilt in it; but it is as true that every sin doth not lay a like load, and burthen upon the conscience, nor is every sin equally hainous in the sight of God; but is very much varied by the circumstances of it, both by the circumstances of the fact, and of the persons that commit it. Some sins do more *Vastare & onerare conscientiam*, and consequently a Christian finds it an harder matter to persuade himself that God will forgive him, than others: and hence it is not at all to be wondered, that when God cometh to call home such a Soul, a *Manasses*, a *Saul*, a *Mary Magdalen*, &c. He makes them to feel more of his power, and terrors, and keeps them at a longer distance, from any apprehensions of his love; they have more highly provoked him, and possibly been a more eminent scandal; and it is but a righteous thing with God to make them feel the smart of it.

3. A third thing, which may make this variety of God Providential dealings appear unto us, not *unreasonable*, may be, *The design which God hath upon such a converted Soul*; and that either with *respect unto others*, or, *with respect to the carrying on of his work in his own Soul.* 1. *With respect unto others*; when God hath a design to make some Soul eminently useful to the Souls of others. The Apostle tells us, *Heb.* 2. 18. That Christ was himself *tempted, that he might be able to succour those that are tempted*; and blesseth God, 2 *Cor.* 1. 4. *Who* (saith he) *comforteth us in all tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we our selves are comforted of God.* It is said of *Luther*, that he was wont to say, that *Three things make a Divine, Temptations, Meditation* and *Prayers.* *Luther* was himself a man of great temptations, and by them became able to succour those that were tempted.

ted. No knowledg is like *experimental knowledg*, none knoweth either how to *ſympathize* with, or how to ſuccor thoſe that are under *temptations*, *deſertions*, or any Soul-troubles, ſo well as thoſe who themſelves have been under them; experience is a great Miſtreſs: when therefore God hath a deſign upon ſome Souls, to make uſe of them for ſuccor, and relief of others under Soul-troubles and afflictions, he often firſt brings themſelves under them, and ſupports and comforts them, then they know how to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon, how to comfort and relieve. 2. Again, God may be conceived reaſonably to do it, *upon a gracious deſign, in order to carrying on of his work in their own Souls*: we know not what manner of Spirit we are of, God knoweth all our tempers, ſeeth all our inclinations and diſpoſitions. 1. I have told you that *ſome perſons are more complexioned to ſome ſins than others.* Every man hath his ἰδίαν ἐπιθυμίαν, his proper luſt and corruption, by which he more ordinarily offendeth, than other ways; God to prevent the breaking out of this corruption afterwards, layeth the Soul under the load, and burthen of it, and maketh his former miſcarriages of that Nature, more exceedingly bitter unto him, that ſo he may ſee, how little fruit he may afterwards expect of thoſe things of which he hath been to that degree aſhamed, and which he hath taſted to that degree bitter unto his Soul. 2. He may poſſibly *ſee ſome of more brisk, and airy tempers*, more inclined to pride, and being lifted up above meaſure, and therefore thinks fit to keep them longer under the Spirit of bondage; as he did with *Paul*, after he had been rapt up into the third Heaven, and heard *unutterable words*, leſt (as he ſaith) he ſhould be exalted above meaſure, God gave *him a thorn in the fleſh.* Thus now I have given you ſome little account of the variety of Gods Providential diſpenſations toward Souls, in the collation of the firſt grace; but now I have done, I can only ſay with *Job*, Chap. 26. 14. *Lo theſe are parts of his wayes, but how little a portion is heard of him!* The end of all this diſcourſe is not to pretend to give you all the reaſon of God in theſe his diſpenſations, for *who can by ſearching find out God, who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?* we muſt ſay ſuch knowledg is *too wonderful for us*, but only to ſhew you, that this various way of Gods dealing with Souls, whom he intendeth to bring to Heaven, is not ſuch, but it will approve it ſelf to the reaſon of every reaſonable Creature, and ſuch as is very equitable, and proper for the wiſe God, in order to the compaſſing of his moſt wiſe and glorious

glorious ends. Let me now shew you what use is proper for us to make of these meditations and observations.

Use 1. In the first place this may mind us to *take heed of a rash judgment, either in our own case or in the cases of others*; we are very prone to give our selves needless trouble, and to pass unrighteous Judgments concerning the work of God upon our own, and others Souls. One concludeth he hath as yet no work of God upon his heart, he was *never humbled*, never so broken upon the Wheel, never under such legal terrors, nor so long under the Spirit of bondage as some others; he cannot give an account to himself of any certain time, nor of any certain Sermon, when, or whereby God wrought upon, and changed his heart; and we are too too ready, to sit in Judgment upon the work of God, also on the Souls of others. You have heard that the *ways of God are past finding out*. God doth not always tread the same path, and the variety which God useth towards Souls under different circumstances, and for different ends, is very reasonable: we have all of us reason enough to be troubled if we do not find this great work wrought in our Souls; but if we do find, that our hearts are changed, that the work is done for the way or means, or time, which God hath taken or used to do it in, or by, we have no such reason to be sollicitous; those who are come to work in the Vineyard at the Ninth, or Eleventh, hour shall have their Penny, as well as those who were called, and came in at the *Sixth hour*: God doth not always work in the same order, and method, he is not to be tracked in his ways. The conversion of the Soul lyeth in the change of the heart; (I would not with any trust to Baptismal *conversion, or regeneration*) If the heart be changed, if the Soul be renewed, according to the Image of God; if old things be passed away in it, and all things become new, whether it was done, this, or that way, by this, or that means, in this, or that manner, is no just cause at all of trouble to us: God hath several ways to do his work by; we must pass a judgment upon our selves, from what we find within our selves, the frames, and tempers of our Spirits; for *what man knoweth* the things of a man, but the Spirit of a man, which is within him. But we must judge of others from the change we see in their lives and conversations. *Man looketh upon the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart*, 1 *Sam.* 16.7. If we look upon our Neighbour, and there appear no spots upon him, but what may be the spot of Gods people; no markes of *profaneness*, or *impiety* towards

wards God, nor of *unrighteouſneſs* toward man, but he appeareth to us one, who *herein exerciſed himſelf, to keep a good conſcience both toward God, and towards men*, we ought to judge this perſon, one whoſe heart God hath changed. If we look into our own hearts, and can find that we truly love God, and hate evil, that we are afraid to ſin againſt God, and are deſirous in all things to pleaſe him, though we cannot find, that the ways of God with our Souls in our converſion, have been like the ways of God with the Souls of other men; yet we ought not in this caſe to judge, or to condemn our ſelves, Gods ways are not alike with every Soul. Its work in the effect, (as to the main) is alike, for it is true, as to every man, that *except he be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*; but his way of working is not the ſame.

Uſe 2. In the Second place, what you have heard affordeth *great encouragement to every Soul under any circumſtance to turn unto God, that it may live, and not dye.* God calleth into his Vineyard, at ſeveral hours; ſome he calleth at the Sixth, ſome at the Nineth, ſome at the *Eleventh* hour. Happy, thrice happy are they, whom God findeth at the Sixth hour, in their youth, and perſuadeth to go into his Vineyard; they ordinarily find not ſo *hard a labour* of the new-birth, they have the priviledg of a longer familiarity, and acquaintance with God, they have more opportunities of doing God ſervice; God often honoreth them to do him ſome more eminent ſervice: but if you have ſlipped that hour, if it be the Ninth hour; nay, if it be in the wane of your life; if it be towards *Evening* with you, that you have nothing to do, but to repent and dye, ſinging the Song of old *Simeon. Now Lord, let thy ſervant depart in peace, for mine eyes have ſeen thy Salvation*; yet, thou haſt no cauſe to diſcourage thy ſelf. God doth not work upon all Souls at one and the ſame period of time. Great ſinners have no reaſon to *diſcourage themſelves*; the gate to Heaven may appear ſomething ſtraiter to you, than unto others; you may have an harder work of it: it is an hard thing for thoſe *that are accuſtomed to do evil, to do well*: but yet, if God will give you an heart to repent, if the Lord ſhall change your hearts, and incline you to turn unto him, there is mercy with God even for you, God can men make to bring forth fruit in their old age.

Uſe 3. Laſtly (and with that I ſhall ſhut up this diſcourſe.) This ſpeaketh aloud unto all ſuch as have the charge of others,

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as Parents, Masters, Tutors, and Governours, to be daily *labouring with them, for the good of their Souls, using all possible means to bring them unto God.* It is *Solomons* advice, Ecc. 11. 6. *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thy hand be slack; for thou knowest not, which shall prosper, this, or that, or whether both shall be alike good*: you that are Parents of Children, Masters of Servants, in any relation Governours of youth; see what an ingagement lyeth upon you to bring up your Children, to Reading the word, Catechizing, to bring them to hear faithful Preachers, sow the seeds of Spiritual learning, and instruction in them, in the Morning of their lives: hearken not to those, who would perswade you that Catechizing in your families is useless, and that a Notional knowledg signifieth nothing until God come to work in their hearts: that is true, but ill applyed, when used as a discouragement to the use of the means of knowledg; God doth his work by the use of means on our parts, and Preaching is not the only means. God sometimes in the conversion of sinners maketh his way to their hearts by their heads, sanctifying notions of truth dropt into Souls of persons in their tender years, and reflecting them many years after upon the conscience; you *know not which shall prosper, this or that:* use them to read the Scriptures, to be examined, questioned, and catechised out of the Scriptures, to hear lively and powerful preaching; you know not which shall prosper in order to the conversion of their Souls, and turning them to God, this, or that, whether reading, or preaching, or Family-instruction: God that can work without means, useth as you have heard a variety of means, and doth not limit himself to this, or that. Or whether *both may not prove alike good*, God may use one means to begin, another to perfect; one to plant, another to water; one for laying the foundation, another for building thereon, and laying the corner-stone; and yet when the building is finished, you shall see reason enough to cry, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be given the glory*, to cry *Grace, Grace unto it.* The Knowing person, when converted hath usually (if not guilty of notorious sins against his light) the easiest new-birth, and the most quiet and peaceable life. Many more doubts and fears, trouble those that are more imperfect in their knowledg of the things of God, than trouble others. O let it not be said of you as it was said of *Herod*, (upon occasion of the killing of his own Child amongst the rest of the Infants) *That it*

was

was better to be Herods *Hog, than his Child.* Let it not be said of any of you, that it is better to be your *Horse*, or *Swine*, or other *Beast*, than your Child, or Servant, or Scholar. For your Beasts, you provide all things suitable to their Natures, and capacities. O remember your Children have Spiritual beings, and are born into the World with a capacity of Eternity, nay under a certain ordination to a miserable or blessed Eternity.

SERMON LIII.

Isaiah. 28. 29.

This also cometh from the Lord, who is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in working.

THE Particle *This*, in the front of my Text, is relative to what went before, where the Prophet had been speaking of some works of Divine Providence, and those but of an inferiour Nature, if compared with others; the *discretion* by which men having divers sorts of Grain, and Seeds, are taught to get them out of their husks, and ears, by instruments not always the same, but suted to the respective Grain, or Seed, they intend to get out. Of this it is, that the Text speaks, This *discretion*, and saith, *it cometh from the Lord, who is wonderful in Counsel*: So that I desire you to observe, that my following discourses which I shall bottom on this Text, are not founded on the first words, and the relative Particle *This*; but upon the latter, where Gods *wonderfulness in Counsel*, and *excellency in working* are join'd together. Gods excellency in the workings of Providence floweth from his wonderful Counsel; and if such little *instincts* as the foregoing verses speak of, be from the Lord, the Lords *workings*, and from a wonderful Counsel, an easie argumentation will conclude, that Gods dispensations of special grace by

the hand of his Providence, must needs be the effects of infinite wisdom, and proceed from the Lord, who is *wonderful in Counsel*; which is the point I have in hand, and to vindicate Divine wisdom from our exceptions against it, because of the variety which God useth in his dispensations of it, and the inequal distributions of it to the Children of men. I have spoken already to the *varieties of Providence*, in the *dispensations* of the *first grace*, *by which a Soul is converted, and turned from sin unto God*, in which work the Soul is *meerly passive*. I come now to speak to those dispensations of *Spiritual grace*, wherein the Soul is not *meerly passive*, *but active*; as to these, also we shall observe a great variety in the motions of Divine Providence, and a great inequality in the distributions of it, of which I shall give you some account, and then shut up the discourse. To this *inequality of distribution*, good Christians often find it an hard thing to reconcile their thoughts: and although God must be allowed to have a power, to do with his own what he pleaseth, and if *Grace* were not for *Gods own*, it would be no *Grace*; yet, we are too too much like Children, who considering not their Fathers *power*, and *Prerogative*, nor it may be their own *demerits*, and their own unworthiness to receive such a favour, nor possibly their *incapacity*, to receive, *injoy*, or use it: Yet because they are *Children*, as well as their *Brethren* and *Sisters*, know not how to brook it, that their Father should appear more kind to any of them, than he is to them. Let me therefore attempt the vindication of God in the inequality of these dispensations; and that you may know in what order to follow me, I shall lay down this method.

1. First, I will shew you wherein *this inequality lieth*.

2. Secondly, I will endeavour to shew you the reasonableness of the motions of Divine Providence, in making this unequal distribution.

3. Lastly, I shall make some Application of it practically.

1. Let us first enquire wherein *this inequality lieth*. In the general, *It lieth not in any influxes, and dispensations of grace necessary in order to the Salvation of their souls*. There is an union betwixt Christ and every believer; in this union lieth the *spiritual life* of a Christian: as the *natural life* lieth in the union which is betwixt the soul and the body, so the spiritual life lieth in the union *betwixt the soul and Christ*; and as the union betwixt the soul and body is preserved, and maintained by *bodily nourishment*;

blessed

bleſſed be God, in order to that end: ſo the ſpiritual union betwixt the ſoul and Chriſt muſt alſo be maintained by a *ſpiritual aliment*: this *aliment*, or nouriſhment is the influx of the ſpirit of grace; for though Ordinances be external means, yet Ordinances ſignifie nothing without the influx of the ſpirit upon them, and in them. Now for ſuch an influence of grace, as is neceſſary to *uphold* the *ſpiritual life* of the believers, to keep the ſoul, and its beloved together, God giveth it to every believer; *Whom he loveth, he loveth to the end:* for if this were not ſo, there were a poſſibility of a *total Apoſtacy*, and of the *interciſion of a ſtate of Juſtification.* This would infer a mutability in the *counſels* and *purpoſes of God*, and ſubject the *gifts and calling* of God to *repentance*: For let *Jeſuites* and *Arminians* ſay what they will, their *fictitious purpoſe and counſel* of God, to *love thoſe that are believers*, will not ſalve this ſore; for according to this Doctrine, a man may be a believer, and in favour with God this month, and an unbeliever and out of favour with God the next month; and ſo God may love and hate the ſame perſon a thouſand times in his life-time: and whether this be conſiſtent with the unchangeableneſs of God, let any one judg, who underſtandeth any thing of common ſenſe. We therefore ſtand fixed in this, that God neither is, nor ever will be wanting to any ſoul, as to thoſe *influxes of Divine grace, which are neceſſary to maintain the union, and ſpiritual life* of the ſoul: and (by the way) this well conſidered, might much tend to ſatisfie a ſoul diſſatisfied at Gods unequal diſtributions of ſpecial grace; which although they are exceedingly ſweet, and of high advantage to gracious ſouls; yet are ſuch, as are not of the *neceſſaries of Salvation*, but only *gradual manifeſtations*, and ſuch as are *ſpiritual accomodations*, and *advantages to it in its way to Heaven:* but this is enough to have ſpoken to this queſtion Negatively. I come now to ſpeak more Poſitively: In the general, they are ſuch only as reſpect the *porro eſſe*, or the advantages of ſpiritual life. Now what they are, comes next into our enquiry: They are I think reducible to Three heads; the influences of 1. *Strengthening.* 2. *Quickning.* 3. *Conſolatory grace.* That there are ſuch influences, and that all have not a like meaſures of them, no, nor the ſame ſoul at all times; is ſo obvious to the *experience* of all Chriſtians, that little need be ſaid of it.

1. For *ſtrengthening grace*, *I can do all things*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) *through Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth me.* It is that which the Apoſtle prayeth for, in the behalf of the *Epheſians*, Eph. 3. 16. *That he*

would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inward-man. And thus Christ telleth us, *John* 15. *Without me you can do nothing.* Now the Object of this influx of grace, is *duty*, or *sin and temptation to it.*

1. *Duty*; *I can do all things* (saith *Paul*) *through Christ that strengtheneth me*: Christians duty is various, and lieth in such motions of the inward, and of the outward man; both in *doing*, and *suffering*, as God hath any-where in his Word required of us. *Strengthening grace*, with respect unto duty, is nothing else but the *gracious influence of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ upon the soul,* Phil. 1. 3. 14. *by which the Soul is made more able both to do, and suffer the will of* 2 Tim. 4. 7. *God.* Now, that there is a great variety, and unequal dispensation of this influence of Divine grace, both to different souls, and to the same soul at different times, is so obvious, as would be perfectly needless to spend any time in the proof of it; neither do all souls find the same degrees of *spiritual strength*, nor do the same souls find it at all times.

2. Another Object, about which *strengthening grace* is exercised, is *sin*, and *motions and temptations to sin.* That which we call *strengthening grace*, with reference to *sin*, is a secret influx of the spirit of holiness, by which the soul of a Christian findeth it self inabled to resist its inward motions to sin, and to repel *temptations* from the World, and the Devil. St. *James* telleth us, That *every one is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.* This is that which Divines call, *tentationem à carne*, a temptation from the flesh: besides, we know that the *evil spirit* hath a power to make impressions, and to offer suggestions to us; and that either *immediately*, or by wicked men, and sinful instruments: this is that which they call, *tentationem ab hoste*, a temptation from our grand Adversary: and there is a temptation wherein both these concur; this is that which they call, a *mixt temptation*: Now as to all, It is our duty to *resist*, and this is *the fighting the good fight*, the maintaining that *spiritual combate*, which the Scripture speaks of. Now there is nothing more evident in matter of Fact amongst Christians, than that some Christians are more strong, and able to resist motions to sin, of any nature, than others; they are more able to *mortifie their members*, and the *deeds of the body* (as the Apostle calls them, *Rom.* 8.) *through the spirit.* Yea, one and the same Christian doth not find the like degrees of this spiritual strength and ability at all times. There was a time when *David* com-

complained, that *iniquities prevailed against him*, Psal. 65. 3. When St. *Paul* cried out, *Who shall deliver me from this body of death*: And another time when he could say, *I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.*

2. A second dispensation of Grace, is that which I called *quickening grace*: *An influx of the* spirit of grace upon the soul, by which the soul in all its *spiritual conversation, is made more free and lively*; that it *maketh haste*, and *delayeth not, to keep the Lord's Commandments.* It findeth an *inlarged heart, and runneth the way of the Lords Commandments*: that this proceedeth from an influx of grace, is plain: *David* prayeth unto the Lord, that he would *quicken him in the way of his Commandments. Quicken me in thy way*, Psal. 119. 37. It is as manifest upon the experience of all Christians, that God distributeth this influence of this grace unequally, neither the like measures unto *all Christians*, nor to the same Christians at all times: Hence are the complaints of Christians, of the *dulness*, and *deadness*, and *straitness of their hearts*: they indeed, through grace, keep on in the Lords ways, and are kept from *Apostacy*, they return not with the *Dog to the vomit*; but they move heavily, the *wheels of their Charots* are taken off, they almost force themselves to duties of Communion with God, and do not find a freedom to them, and a delight and sweetness in them; but are secretly saying within themselves, *When will the Sabbath be done?* When *will the duty be over?* it is no pleasure to them to serve the Lord; when-as at other times, their souls are *full of spiritual life*, they are longing for Sabbaths, and for times of prayer.

3. Lastly, *There are also dispensations of consolatory grace*: these are *the influences of the Spirit of God upon the soul, by which the soul is refreshed and comforted in the apprehensions of the love of God.* These admit of a variety of degrees, as they arise in the soul, either, 1. *From the view of the souls own sincerity, and its ability to apprehend its interest in the promises, and to apply the Scripture unto it self.* Or 2. From *some more extraordinary witnessings, and sealings of the holy Spirit*, who, you know, is called the *Comforter*, and who, as the Apostle speaketh, *witnesseth together with our spirits, that we are the children of God.* Now the sadness, and dejections of some Christians spirits over others, and of the same Christians Spirits, at some times more than others, is a sufficient evidence of the inequality of these distributions. There was a time, when *David* himself cried out, *When wilt thou comfort me?* Psal. 119. 82.

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as much as at other times, he *triumphed*, and *made his boast* in God: and from hence now you may understand the nature of what we call *Desertions*. God never leaves nor forsakes his people, so as he doth not supply them with influences of Grace sufficient to uphold the Union betwixt Christ and their souls, nor doth he deny such influences to any soul that believeth in Christ: But God may and doth often withdraw himself, as to the gradual manifestations of himself to them, in such dispensations of grace whereby he *strengtheneth them* against *sin*, or unto *duty*; or whereby he quickneth them, and maketh them free and lively in his Service; or finally such, whereby he comforteth them with the apprehensions, or assurances of his love in Christ. Now these varieties being observable in matter of fact, in the dispensations of Divine grace, even to Gods own children; My next work must be to shew you the reasonableness of the motions of Divine Providence, in this unequal distribution, and to proportion some answer to these following Questions.

1. Quest. *Why God suffereth some more than others to be tempted, and to fall by temptation, yea, some of his own people?*

2. Quest. *Whence it is, that some of the children of God find much more strength unto spiritual duty than others find, and the same children of God, at some time find more strength than they do at others times?*

3. Quest. *Whence it is, that some godly persons find more freedom and liveliness in the service of God, than others do; and the same persons find more liveliness and freedom at one time than they do at another?*

4. Quest. *Whence it is, that some Christians are more full of spiritual joy and consolations than others are?* To these which properly relate to the varieties before observed, Two more may also be added.

5. Quest. *Whence it is, that godly persons who are all informed by the same spirit of truth, have such different apprehensions of the things of God, one from another, and that some times in very momentous points?*

6. Quest. Lastly, *Whence it is, that some Christians grow faster in grace than others do?*

1. Quest. *Why God suffereth some, yea, some of his own dear servants to be more tempted than others, yea, and when he knoweth that they will fall?*

That it is so, is past all dispute. *Satan* obtained leave of God

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to tempt *Job*, and Christ told *Peter*, that he had desired to *winnow him like wheat*; he tempted *David to number the people*: The Text saith, that *Satan stood up against Israel*; and we know that *Satan* prevailed against all these: And it is expresly said concerning *Hezekiah*, that God *left him* to his temptations, 2 *Chron.* 32. 31. And we see it in daily experience, that some of the people of God are both much more *buffetted* by *Satans temptations*, and overcome by them than others are; wanting strength to say, *get thee behind me Satan.*

1. In the first place, *I do think much of this is founded, or at least highly advantaged from nature.* Concerning temptations which are, *à carne*, from the flesh, when a man is only *drawn away by his own lust*: There is nothing more certain, than that divers persons have more *strong inclinations* and *dispositions to some sins* than unto others; and there needeth a more eminent assistance of *Divine grace*, to restrain such lusts in such souls: and although it be true concerning such *temptations* as are *impressions*, or *suggestions* from *Satan*, that they are not natural, but *preternatural*; yet one soul may have a more *natural aptitude to receive them*, either from *its complexion* and *constitution*, or from its *disease* and *distemperature*, under which it may at some time labour more than another; and this may be one, and that a great cause. For God is not always, nor ordinarily pleased to work miraculously. It is usually said of *Melancholy*, that it is *balneum diaboli*, a melancholick temper, state, or constitution of body, is a temper very receptive of impressions and suggestions from the Devil. Now I say, where a man is naturally more complexionated to some sins, or where any persons are from their complexion, or from some bodily distemper more apt to receive such kind of impressions, it cannot be expected, but that they should fall oftner into such temptations, and be troubled more with them, and by them, than other Christians, who have not those natural disadvantages; and it can hardly be expected that they should ordinarily be freed from that natural incumbrance, by special, and eminent assistances of Divine grace.

2. In the second place, Mens *different sinnings* may make this also appear but *a reasonable motion of Providence*: It is true, it is a dreadful punishment of sin, for God to punish the sins of people, by suffering them to be *led into temptation.* It is a dreadful curse, or imprecation of *David* upon the enemies of the Church, *Psal.* 109. 6. *Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his*

right

right hand. God doth thus often punish peoples sins, by letting *Satan* loose upon them: the effects of this are sad enough, none need a greater evil than to have *Satan always at his right hand*, assiduously and violently moving him unto evil; and though it be not so ordinary, yet God may thus punish his own people. *Satan* was at *David*'s right hand, when he would number the people. St. *Paul* had a *messenger of Satan sent to buffet him*: what that *messenger of Satan was*, is not so easie to determine; it was certainly some great affliction in which *Satan* had a particular ministery, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7. Some Divines do think it was some *great temptation*; indeed the Scripture doth not mention it as the punishment of *Paul*'s sin, but as preventive of sin, *lest* (saith he) *I should be exalted above measure.* Undoubtedly *temptations* may be punishments of sin, and in those desperate temptations to self-murther, *&c.* which have prevailed against men, the *sin* hath been often made evident: and possibly as to St. *Paul*, God might discern *Paul*'s heart begin to swell, upon occasion of his Revelations, and might send him a messenger of Satan to *buffet him*, as well for the *beginnings of the workings of Pride*, which he had discerned in him, as to prevent the further increases of it. It is not so easie to determine what *Davids sin was*, but in probability it was *pride*: *Davids* heart was *lifted up*, upon the view of the great number of people which God had put under his Government; God letteth loose *Satan* upon him, he moveth *David to number the people*, by which he knew God would be sufficiently provoked, to abate that wherein he glory'd. The case was much the same with *Hezekiah*, though we do not read of so eminent and immediate a ministry of *Satan*. The Text saith, *God left him*: it was in the pride of *Hezekiahs* heart, that he would shew his Treasure to the *King of Babylon*; God leaves him, the temptation prevails upon him. This by the way, doth not only let us see, that God sometimes by temptations punisheth his own people for their sin; but that *pride* and *swelling of our hearts, upon the account of our enjoyments, is one of those sins for which God suffereth Satan to stand at our right hand. Curiosity* is another sin, an itch after knowledg, which God hath hidden from us: It is a sad story how many have been thus catched in the snare of the Devil; indeed our first Mother *Eve* was thus catched, but this were too large a Theme to instance in all those particular sins which God hath thus punished, or may thus punish. Now in regard that the *sins* of all Gods people are not equal, but

they

they may fall (ſome of them) into more great, and hainous ſins than others: It is but a reaſonable motion of Divine Providence, that ſuch as do ſo, ſhould be more troubled with Satan *at their right hand*, with *meſſengers of Satan ſent to buffet them*, than others.

3. A third reaſonable account of this may be *Gods Prerogative*. God may do it for *the trial of their graces*. I know not what other account we can give, *than this*, of Gods diſpenſations to *Job*. God himſelf gives thus, this account of him, *then he was a juſt and upright man*. Yet he giveth *Satan* leave to *ſtand at his right hand*, he tells him, *all that he had was in his power, but only his life*. It is ſaid, that God left *Hezekiah to try what was in his heart; to try, that he might know all that was in his heart*. Divines diſpute about that Pronoun *He*, whether it referreth unto God, or to *Hezekiah*, 2 *Chron.* 32. 31. The matter I do not conceive much, whether it referreth to one, or to the other. *That God might know what was in his heart*. Did not then (you will ſay,) God know what was in the heart of *Hezekiah*? Doubtleſs, he to whom all contingencies were naked, who knew all things paſt, preſent, and to come, could not be ignorant what was in *Hezekiah's heart*, and what he would do when he left him. But the Scripture often ſpeaketh of God, after the manner of men; they know not ſecret, hidden things, till they be brought to demonſtration: God left him, that he might know, that is, *that he might in matter of fact ſee what was in his heart*. This could be no matter of pleaſure, and delight to the Holy God, but only a *juſt medium*, in order to the puniſhment, which he intended *Iſrael* in the poſterity of that good man. But God leaveth many of the Souls of his People, that they *may be tempted*, and in the hour of their temptation, put forth, exert, and exerciſe their grace, in the exerciſe of which the Lord hath a great deal of pleaſure and delight. This ſeemeth to be the caſe of *Job*, the ſecond time that you read *Job* 1. of *Satans* appearance before God: God glorieth in *Job*, *Job* 2. 3. *Haſt thou* (ſaith he,) *conſidered my ſervant* Job, *that there is none like him in the Earth, a perfect, and upright man, one that feareth God, and eſcheweth evil, and ſtill he holdeth faſt his integrity, although thou movedſt me againſt him to deſtroy him without cauſe*, Job 2. 3. God delights in the combates of his People, where they come off *conquerors*; yea, *more than Conquerors*. I remember thoſe two great Commanders, *Joab* and *Abner*, once ſaid, Let the young men *ariſe and play before us*: that was a *bloody game*, for they mutually

kill'd each other: so were the *Romans Gladiators games*, and the *combates with wild Beasts*, to which they exposed some miserable Creatures; yet, those men of blood took a pleasure in them: God knoweth *the good fight* shall have no such issue. *Christ* was not *tempted* for nothing, the Apostle telleth us, *he was therefore tempted, that he might be able to succour them that were tempted*: himself told *Peter*, that although *Satan* had desired to *winnow* him *like Wheat*, yet, he *had prayed, that his faith might not fail.* This being secured, God delighted to see *Satan*, and a *believing Soul play before him*; to see his People exercising their *knowledg, faith, love, patience, courage*, and *fortitude*, in *resisting* Satans temptations and making him to flee from them. Now who can deny unto God the satisfaction and pleasure which he taketh *in the exercise of those habits of grace which he hath given them*? The use of that Spiritual armour which he hath armed them with?

4. Fourthly, It is but a reasonable motion of Divine *Providence*, *with reference to the different service which he hath for some to do.* It is said of Christ that *he was therefore tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted. We are not ignorant of his wiles*, (saith the Apostle) the Apostle not being himself ignorant of *Satans wiles* made him more fit to caution, and instruct others with reference to them. You know it is a great advantage to a Family, with reference to the *small Pox*, or other contagious Diseases, to have some members of it, to have laboured under, and escaped those Diseases. The Church of God, which is his Family, could not well be without some Souls, that have been under temptations; none knows so well, how to speak to, and apply themselves unto those that are tempted, as those who themselves have gone through that fire; they are best able to teach others in their own former circumstances, what to do, and what to avoid. They know how to *strengthen them*, with those words which themselves in their circumstances *heard from God*, and to *comfort them, with those consolations with which they themselves were comforted by God.* It is therefore reasonable that some should be tempted, because all are in subjection to temptations, and may be tempted, and therefore had need of some Nurses to be provided for them. On the other side it is *unreasonable that all should be tempted*, for who then should there be Ministerial to succour the tempted? Nor let any say, This were indeed something, if none were tempted, but such as conquered the tempters; but how doth

doth God suffer those to be tempted, who he knoweth will fall?

5. Fifthly therefore, Neither is this unreasonable; *For there is a difference of fallings: God suffereth none of his own People to be tempted, who shall finally fall.* They *may fall*, but *let not their enemy rejoice over them*; though they fall, they shall rise again. *Job* fell, but he rose again; *Peter* fell in the hour of temptation, he denied his *Master*, and that *with cursing* and *swearing*; but his Master looked upon him, *he went out, and wept bitterly.* God indeed may suffer a reprobate to be tempted, who he knoweth, *will fall*, and so fall as to rise no more, but he never suffereth his Saints to fall finally. *Satan* may stand at *Joshua*'s right hand to resist him, but God will say unto Satan, *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Hierusalem rebuke thee, is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* Believers may be tempted, but *God will bruise Satan under their feet shortly.* Now, if the question be intended of *mediate fallings*, not a *final falling*; why suffereth God his People to be tempted, who he knowes will *get a* fall *under the temptation*, though they shall rise again? I have answered it before, when I shewed you, why God *permitteth his People to sin*; he would certainly not do it, if he did not know how from their *falls*, to extract his own glory. An ancient Writer gives us a large account of this. That (saith he) the wisdom of God might be manifested, who can bring good out of evil, for God is so good, and infinitely wise, that he would never suffer evil to be, if he did not know how from it to elicit, and draw out that which is good: That the goodness of God might be made glorious, in pardoning and raising up the elect, and the Justice of God might be glorified, in the righteous condemnation of others. That men might be deprived of their natural freedom in acting: nor, saith he, is it reasonable, that the sinfulness of the Creature should hinder the exhibition of the Divine goodness: That by his Saints repentance and victory at last, they might have a more glorious Crown; and that they might know, and see what is in their own hearts, and how much they live upon Divine grace, and like burnt children, they might more dread the fire, and take heed afterward of having any confidence in themselves. Finally, which is all in short, (for enumeration of particulars in this case, would be endless and incertain) thus much we may be assured of God, he would never suffer any *elect Vessel*, to be *bored through* with a temptation, if he did not know how to make it issue in his more abundant glory, and their more abundant good.

Applic. Suffer me now before I proceed to the other Questions, to make some short Application of this discourse, the sum of which is no more but this, *That as to converted Souls, God doth not equally distribute the influence of special grace.* Although he distributeth to all, so much as is necessary to the upholding of the Union of their Souls with Christ, and to maintain the Spiritual life, so as the Oyl doth not fail from the Cruise, nor the Meal shall not fail from the Barrel, until they come into their glory; yet, for the manifestations of his love, in such influences of grace, as are only of further advantage unto Souls in their way to Heaven, such as strengthening, quickning, and consolating influences, God variously distributeth them according to his infinite wisdom: he gives to some an *Omer*, to others an *Ephah*, particularly I have shewed it you in those influences of grace, by which God strengtheneth the Soul, in the resisting of *temptations*; and I have shewed you the reasonableness, and something of the wisdom God, in these dispensations. Now from this Discourse let us learn divers things.

1. Inst. First, the differences *betwixt* the necessary *influences of grace*, and such as are not *absolutely necessary*, but of high advantage to a Soul in its way to Heaven. Grace is necessary, (*by grace ye are saved*, saith the Apostle) but all grace is not necessary. The grace of *justification* is necessary. *Except a man be born again*, saith our Saviour, *he can never enter into the Kingdom of God.* Every Believer hath this, he is born again, he is sanctified in body, and mind and spirit. But now there are further *manifestations*; which make *gradual differences* in Christians, and the receit of which also doth much depend upon our action. For although in the first grace, the Soul be *purely passive*; yet, as to the receiving of *further* grace it is *active*, therefore the promise of Christs manifesting himself, *Joh.* 14. 21. is made to them who love Christ, and keep his Commandments. I pray observe this, for it is a thing of no small concernment. From hence,

2. Inst. Secondly, you may easily conclude, *how unreasonable it is for any Soul to quarrel at God, or murmur against his dispensations, though it findeth not those gradual manifestations of Divine love unto it, which others do experience from God.* If thou beest equally dealt with, as to the *necessaries of Salvation*, thou mightest sit down, so far satisfied as not to murmur at God, if as to the *gradual manifestations of* his love in some things, he will give unto another,

more

more than unto thee. Every thing of Divine grace is ſweet, you muſt not therefore miſtake the tendency of my diſcourſe, as if I were perſwading you to ſuch a ſatisfaction, as not to thriſt and breath after, and labour for perfection in Spiritual *ſtrength, life,* and *comfort*, they are all things to be valued above Worlds: but only not to murmur, and repine againſt God as an inequal Father, or an hard Maſter, becauſe he doth not every way make your Spiritual life is ſweet, and perfect as others. And any complaint of this Nature is the more unreaſonable; becauſe for *the moſt part it is to be laid upon our ſelves*, and is like the Wifes quarrel with her Husband, for want of Children, when-as the Scripture generally layes the defect upon the Woman. So it is here generally; the reaſon why ſome Chriſtians have more ſadneſs, leſs ſtrength, and Spiritual life, or livelineſs, and vigour than others, is becauſe they have more ſin and corruption, and are more wanting in the uſe of that means, which ly upon them to uſe in order to their obtaining of ſuch degrees.

Uſe 3. In the third place from this diſcourſe, it will not be hard for you to conclude, the duty of tempted Souls, *in order to the abating of the force of a temptation*, or *wholly driving the tempter from them.* Indeed, the whole of a Chriſtians duty, in order to this end, cannot be concluded from this diſcourſe, but much of it may.

1. Firſt, The uſe of *Natural means, which may be proper for the correcting that bodily humour, or removing that natural diſtemper of which Satan* takes *advantage*; that is in ſhort, whatſoever *hindereth the free exerciſe of our reaſon*, and conſequently keepeth us from *paſſing a juſt judgment upon our ſelves*, which you know we muſt do by the uſe of reaſon. I have often thought upon my experience of Souls under theſe circumſtances, that the *Phyſitian* is many times *Gods Ordinance*, as well as the *Miniſter*, for the ſuccour of tempted Souls; for Souls under theſe circumſtances, are not delivered miraculouſly, but in an ordinary way of Providence generally, which cannot be without *ſome freedom of the exerciſe of their own reaſon, and judgment*, to apply what they read in, or hear from the word of God. Hence it is, that I have often ſeen poor Souls under theſe dark circumſtances, *to whom all reading of Scripture, all diſcourſes of Miniſters have ſignified little, or nothing, or at moſt nothing beyond a little preſent refreſhment*: the reaſon is, becauſe *their minds are darkned*, and *they have not the free uſe of their reaſon to make a concluſion to themſelves from premiſes, and principles*, and *propoſitions*

positions of the word brought unto them, and opened unto them by the most able Ministers of the Gospel, who in these streſſes of Providence have Ministered to them: not that I think there is nothing in what we call *temptation*, but *melancholy*: there is hardly any thing more demonstrable to me, than that there is an hand, a great hand of *Joab*, of *Satan* I mean, in the impressions we often find made upon, and suggestions that are made to persons labouring under these *bodily distempers*. The suggestions to such Souls to *blaspheme God*, to *destroy themselves*, &c. (which are very ordinary,) are certainly when they fall upon persons, who are of knowledg, and have lived in aw, dread, and high reverence of God, more than the natural Products, and results of a disordered Nature; which we may the rather conclude from the strange violence, and impetuousness of them so frequently returning, (as they oft do) and so strangely resisting all arguments, and means used against them: besides, *melancholy*, meer melancholy of its own Nature, renders the Soul *fearful*, *jealous*, and *suspicious* of any thing, which may be hurtful to it; and though indeed the *Philosopher* disputes, *self-Murder* to be the effect not of a *valorous and couragious, but of a cowardly Spirit*; yet it argueth a more Natural valour, than *melancholy disposeth and inclineth one unto*. But this I think, the Devil taketh advantage of this bodily distemper, under the prevailing of which the Soul is weaker, being hindered in the exercise of its reason, that it is not able, either it self to conclude as at other times, from what it hath read in the word of God, nor yet to apply what is offered unto it, from Ministers of the Gospel. So as in reason, unless we should expect that God should work out of the road of common Providence; the first thing to be done, is the use of *Natural means*, (with earnest prayer to God for his blessing upon it,) for the correcting of that bodily humour, which prevailing clouds the mind, and hindereth it from concluding reasonably, in making a judgment upon it self; and I have often known, that in these cases upon the use of due natural means, the temptation hath also vanished, and gone away with the disease. I could give you one instance of a Person, a young Woman known to many of you, who of a sudden had fallen under a *great temptation*, and was narrowly prevented in the *destroying her self*, *in the night-time*; in the Morning, my self was sent for: she having formerly often used to discourse freely with me about her Eternal condition; when I came to her,

I found her in great ſadneſs, and heavineſs of Spirit, but could draw out little diſcourſe from her: only *ſhe was not Elected, ſhe was damned*, &c. with ſome few other *deſperate concluſions*. I left her adviſing her friends to ſend for a learned *experienced Phyſitian to her*. Upon the uſe of a little means, ſhe recovered her diſtempers, and I never heard of her temptation more. It is true, it is not thus always, the natural diſtemper is ſometimes more ſtubborn, and reſiſteth natural means, and *Satan* working at the advantage of that, doth many times much longer moleſt ſome; but I have ſeldom or never known any, but in theſe caſes *with the recovery of their health*, have likewiſe recovered themſelves (through Gods bleſſing) *out of that ſnare of the Devil*, which he hath laid for them in their diſeaſe, and diſtempered condition of their body.

2. A ſecond thing which this Diſcourſe prompteth tempted ſouls to, as proper for them, is *a ſearching and examining their ways, a repentance and turning again unto the Lord*. I have ſhewed you in this Diſcourſe, that *temptations* oft-times are puniſhments of ſin; and that the reaſonableneſs and wiſdom of God in theſe motions of Divine Providence, not equally ſtrengthening all ſouls in the reſiſtance of temptation, appeareth, as in other things, ſo in this; that God by *keeping them longer under the buffetings of Satan*, than he *keepeth others*, may make them more ſenſible wherein they have ſinned more than others: I know ſome Divines have thought, and do think, that God uſeth not to keep his people long in an hour of great *temptation*, but in deep puniſhment *for hidden ſins*. I do doubt that, eſpecially where the temptation is advantaged, from a continuing *bodily melancholy*: but withal, oftimes it is ſo; that ſome *paſt ſins, concealed and hidden*, give an advantage to the Adverſary; and that not only when we hide them from God, by not freely confeſſing them, and humbly bewailing them before him, who alone hath power to forgive them, (which alone is neceſſary in order to forgiveneſs.) This was *Davids* caſe, Pſal. 32. 3. *When I kept ſilence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long: For day and night thine hand was heavy upon me: my moiſture was turned into the drought of Summer: I acknowledged my ſin unto thee, and mine iniquity I have not hid: I ſaid I will confeſs my tranſgreſſions unto the Lord, and thou forgaveſt the iniquity of my ſins.* There you have both the caſe and the cure. But ſometimes *the concealing of ſome ſins from men*, is a great cauſe of the long abiding of a *temptation*; and this moſtly happeneth in ſouls that are *weak in knowledg*,

and,

and not able of themselves to find out, and apply to themselves, that relief which is in Scripture for them under such guilt; and therefore had need of the help of some spiritual Interpreter. But I say, in every hour of temptation, it is very proper to a *tempted soul*, to search and see, if he can find no *Achan that troubles him*, or that provoketh God to punish him, by *setting Satan*, or by *suffering Satan to stand at his right hand*: oftentimes (by the way) I have found sins which have been *acts of unrighteousness towards men*, where *restitution hath not been made*, or where *restitution hath been unpossible*, have a long time given advantage to the tempters suggestions; but where particular sins cannot be fixed upon, (as it happeneth in many cases, souls fall under great and exceeding troublesome temptations, whom God hath yet all their life kept and restrained from such erronious transgressions) I say where this happeneth. As *Herod* in great cruelty sent and killed all the children to two years old, that he might be sure not to miss him, who was born King of the *Jews*; so it will be great policy and piety in a Christian to confess all his sins which he can remember, and charge himself with [illegible]; to study the mortifying of every member, that he may be sure to fall upon that which doth offend him, and give the Adversary advantage against him: hence it followeth, that frequent humiliation and prayer, frequent confessions of sin, and prayer for the forgiveness of them through the blood of Christ, are exceeding proper works for souls under temptation. We may indeed concerning violent temptation, say as Christ said of *possession* with the Devil, it seldom cometh off without much fasting and prayer; yea, and *holiness of life*, and *watchfulness against sin*, is the singular duty of poor tempted souls; the soul is at such a time in the spiritual fight. It was Gods special command to the *Israelites*, that *when the host went forth to battel, then they should take heed of every wicked thing:* By a parity of reason, when the soul goeth out to the spiritual fight, and especially when it is in the fight, it standeth concerned to take heed of sinning against God; sin weakens the hand, and there is nothing more ordinary than for Christians in those circumstances to be, *de novo*, troubled for their slips while they have been in that condition.

3. Hence (Thirdly) may easily be concluded the duty of *Christians, to take unto them the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand* against the wiles of the Devil, *in the evil day, and having done*

done all to stand, Eph. 6. 13. not to yeild, but to *resist*. Many arguments might be brought to perswade this spiritual resistance; you have to do with a *foiled Adversary*, you want not a *spiritual assistance*; Christ was therefore tempted, that he might be able to succour you when tempted: he cannot conquer you, but by your *voluntary surrender*; (The *will of man* is a Fort, that is not to be storm'd) many are the *presidents* of those that have resisted, and come out of the field conquerors, *look unto Jesus, the Captain of your salvation*; he resisted, *Mat.* 4. 11. *The Devil leaveth him, and behold Angels came and ministred to him.* After great temptations usually come great *consolations*, great manifestations of God to the souls of his people: But that which follows from this Discourse, is, because *thus you shall fulfil the Lords end*; this is good, acceptable, and well-pleasing unto God. God himself (as I before shewed) glorieth in *Jobs* conquest, and checks the Devil upon it: God therefore bringeth you into the Field, that you might fight valiantly, resist manfully, and at last come out with a Garland of honour: O therefore take heed of casting down your Arms, of entertaining any thoughts of running away! They observe in Battles, that more are slain in a running away, than where they manfully maintain the fight; but in this fight none falleth, but he who yieldeth, and throweth down his Arms. They observe also in War, that the presence of the Prince in the Field, viewing his Souldiers, who behave themselves more or less valiantly, doth much animate Souldiers. You may be assured of this, That when you are in this Spiritual combate, your great *General* is in the Field: God is observing you, particularly observing, how you gird up your loins, stand to your Arms; how you behave your selves in the managery of the fight, and that he therefore suffereth you to be tempted, that he may see, *what faith, what patience*, what *love to God*, is in your hearts. But thus much shall serve to have spoken to this particular, to shew you the wisdom of God, and the reasonableness of his motions of Providence in suffering Souls to be more under temptation than others.

SERMON LIV.

Isaiah. 28. 29.

This also cometh from the Lord, who is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in working.

2 *Quest.* I Proceed now to the Second Question, of those which I propounded; *whence it is that God doth not equally strengthen all the Souls of his People, unto the performance of their duty toward him; yea, and that the same Persons do not at all times find the same measures of Spiritual strength, unto their Spiritual duty?*

Answ. There is nothing more demonstrable in matter of fact, than that it is so; nothing more certain, than that God could make it otherwise: the Question is, whence it is, and how the wisdom, and the reasonableness of Divine Providence appeareth in this dispensation? let me, before I come to speak directly to the Question, premise something, 1. *Concerning Spiritual duty.* 2. Concerning *Strengthning grace.* *Duty* is a word of very large extent, comprehensive of all the *Acts*, both of *Piety* and *Probity*, wherein the Law of Nature, or the Law of God in Scripture maketh us debtors to our great Creator. It is usually divided into our duty towards God, which is that which we call *Piety*, or, our duty *toward man*, which we call *Probity*; both of them lye in the motions of our *hearts*, *tongues*, or more *external actions*. Our duty towards man is much comprehended under the two *generals* of Justice, and Charity. Now for much of this duty, God denieth unto no man a *sufficient strength and power*, so as if he *will*, *he may do it*. No man will deny but a man hath *a power*, to *deal justly*, to *give Alms to the Poor*, and many other things, so as he is but an Hypocrite, that pretends *want of strength* to many *external*

nal actions which God hath commanded him; which are but acts of *moral discipline*: hence it is no great wonder to hear the *Patrons of freewil* urge this as the whole duty of man. But alas, though this be his duty, yet it is but the least part of his duty. Our great duty to God lies as in *external acts of Piety*, so in the *internal government of the motions of our hearts affections*, according to the rule of the Divine law; it lyeth in *external actions*, such as *praying, hearing the word*, &c. But chiefly *in the government of our inward man*, that we may perform all our actions, whether respecting God or man, in such a manner as he hath required. Now that which we call *strengthning grace*, is, *That influence of the holy Spirit upon the Soul, by which the Soul is inabled to perform whatsoever God requireth of it, both in doing and suffering in such an acceptable manner, as God requireth at our hands.* Duty may be divided, 1. *Into such acts which are in our own power, as to the external acts, to perform without any Spiritual gifts; or more special influences of grace*: thus a man may read the word, he may hear Sermons, he may do acts of justice, and charity, and many other things, by virtue of the common Providence of God, keeping up in man his natural faculties; for this now there needeth none of that special *strengthning grace*, about which I am discoursing. Secondly,

2. Such as a *man may perform* by vertue *of common gifts, and influences*, such as *knowledg, utterance*, &c. Which although God doth not give unto all, yet he doth give unto many, who never tast any thing of *his distinguishing grace*. Thus men may *pray, preach*, &c. It is true, some have more ability unto these acts than others, and some Christians at some times may find more strength and ability, than at other times: but this dependeth not upon any influence of *special strengthening grace*; but upon the *different tempers, and complexions of persons*, upon their different measures of knowledg and gifts, and parts; and their strength as to these acts, riseth and falleth, as their gifts and parts increase, hold, or decay.

3. But thirdly, there are duties, that are *more internal*; such as *meditating of God, delighting, believing* in him, *breathing after him, fervency of Spirit*, in his service, the right manner of performing all external acts. Now to the performance of this, there needeth *a special influence in the Spirit of God*; besides all the advantage, which any man can have from natural parts, or gifts. And the experience of every Christian justifieth, that God

useth a great variety in his dispensings of it: some Christians find much more than others do; others find much more at one time, than at an other, both for the performing the *acts of Mortification*, and of *Vivification*; the practice of *dying to sin*, and *living to righteousness*; and also for the bearing any burthens, which God in his Providence layeth upon him, and going through any sufferings, which God hath laid out for him: and these gradual withdrawings of these Divine assistances, are what we call *Divine desertions*, as to these manifestations of grace. Now my next business must be, to shew you the wisdom and reasonableness of the motions of Divine Providence, in the inequality of these dispensations, which sometimes proves matter of great trouble to Gods People.

1. For the differences of *strength*, and *ability*, to the *more external acts of our homage to God*; it is not so properly within my subject to be discoursed: I shall therefore speak but shortly to it: something I am willing to speak, because I fear too many Christians mistake this for *strengthning grace*. This difference ariseth, 1. from *a difference*, or *decay* in *knowledg*, and other *parts*; and *common gifts*. *Knowledg* of the things of God, is the foundation of this practice, and it cannot be expected that Christians weak in knowledg, should be able to express themselves so freely in *prayer*, or in *Spiritual conference*, or *any other exercise*, which dependeth upon *knowledg*, as the more *knowing Christian can*. 2. Secondly, As differenec as to degrees of knowledg is one cause, so *different frequency in Practice*, is an other: a man in practical things is perfected by *practice*. As he that never almost writeth, will forget his hand; and he that useth not himself to *read*, or *speak Latine*, or any other Language, will in a short time lose the very ability, he once had to do it: so it is but a reasonable thing for us to imagine, that he who seldom or never prayeth, should lose his *gift*, *and ability to pray*; and he who seldom, or *never Preacheth*, should lose his gift, and ability to Preach. We find by experience, and may find it, whenever we try it, that a man, that hath an excellent ability to pray, neglecting that gift, in a short time will lose his gift, and not be able to continue Ten lines of sence without a Book. To this may be added, that these performances do also depend upon other natural, and common gifts, which if they fail through age, or other infirmities; it cannot without a Miracle be expected, but that this

strength

strength and ability, should abate also: I know also that God may blast these gifts, and oft doth for mens sins, their neglect of the use of them, their not glorifying of God with them; but Gods usual way of doing this, is, either by permitting the decay of these gifts upon which these exercises depend, or leaving the Hypocrite to fall into such a sensleſness, and sottishness in life, as quite takes him off from any regard of these pieces of homage unto God: but thus much shall serve to have spoken to these varieties and decays of *strength in the inward man.*

2. For the other which are the *influxes* of *Divine, and special grace*, it is certainly reasonable that God should not dispense equal measures to all, if we consider; 1. *That all are not of a alike groweth, and standing in the Church.* There is nothing more ordinary in Scripture than to compare the Church, to a *Fold* of Sheep, to a *Family, &c.* Now there is no Fold, where all are are grown Sheep alike; scarce any Family, where are not some Infants, or young Children. *Christ must carry the Lambs in his Arm*, while he feedeth his *Flock like a Shepheard.* The Scripture speaking of Christians distinguisheth betwixt *Babes*, and grown Persons; betwixt those that are *perfect*, and such as are not *perfect*; such as are *Spiritual*, and such as are *Carnal*; such as are fit for strong Meat, and such as have need of Milk: now although it be true, that this *influx of Grace is from the Spirit of God*; yet, the Spirit of God ordinarly worketh, *Secundum quod natus est Organon*, according to the subject it worketh in; and by our own Spiritual actions we are prepared for the receptions of these Spiritual habits, which are not the influxes of the first grace, but of further grace, and distributed to Souls which have their *senses exercised to discern good and evil*: should God grant out equal measures of this grace unto all, there could be no such thing as *groweth in grace*; no such persons as *Babes in grace*, the Kingdom of grace, would be like that of glory, in which there is no Infant of days, nor old men of years: and indeed this were enough to have spoken to this case, if God did equally dispense out Spiritual strength to those who are of equal standing in the ways of God; for though God will give Heaven at last (which answereth the Penny in the Parable) to him, who comes into the Lords Vineyard at the *Eleventh hour*; yet, he doth not give equal degrees of *peace and strength*, to those that come in to his Vineyard, and work there but one hour, with those

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who have wrought all the heat of the day. Grace strengthens by exercise, as habits are *strengthened, and confirmed by frequent acts*; But yet, this is not enough to say in this case; for all those that be of equal years, and standing in the ways of God, are not of an *equal faith*, nor have an *equal zeal*, fervency, and *intension of affections*: Nay often Christians of a much younger standing, find more Spiritual strength to *mortifie their corruptions*, and perform *Spiritual duties*, than those who have been of many years standing in the ways of God.

3. Thirdly, Therefore *God doubtless doth it many times to punish sin, and guilt in his own People*; either in the neglect of ordinances and duty, or some other *moral miscarriages*. Sin doubly infeebleth a Christians Soul.

1. *As it Naturally deadneth the heart, towards God*, and discourageth its exercises upon him.

2. *As it provoketh God to withdraw himself.* Sin is the aversion of the Soul from God, and its Conversion and turning to the imbraces of the Creature; hence it is impossible that the Soul that delighteth in sin, should equally breath after, and delight in God, as that Soul that hateth sin, and is more perfectly turned from it. Sin quencheth the Holy fire in the Soul, it also discourageth the Soul from its confidence in God, and in its addresses to God; it makes the conscience fly in a mans face, and repeat to him the words of the Psalmist, *Psal.* 50. *What hast thou to do, to declare my Statutes, or that thou shouldest take my Covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my Law behind thee?* Or in the Words of the Apostle, *What fellowship, hath light with darkness? God with Belial? Righteousness with unrighteousness?* Sin enfeebleth the Soul in all its addresses to God, and discourageth it in all it exercises. And 2. *It provoketh God: your iniquities have separated betwixt God and you,* (saith the Prophet) *and your sins have made him to hide his face from you.* It was said by a great Commander of Souldiers, *That he was never afraid to dye, but when his conscience smote him for some guilt of sin*; when the conscience of a Christian reflecteth guilt upon him, he is discouraged from exercising any faith, and confidence in God, and ashamed in the duty of prayer to go unto God. There is no Christian, but findeth this in his own experience, that the conscience of sin doth wonderfully prejudice his Holy boldness, in his approaches to the Throne of Grace; *How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish*

whorish Woman, Ezek. 16. 30. It is indeed a *hinderance* to Sin, and weakness to any Spiritual acting, is the first fruit of sin in the Soul; for what are the Souls exercises upon God, but *Holy Meditation, Faith, Hope, Spiritual desires, delight, a fervency, zeal, or heat of the whole Soul in Gods service?* Now sin rendring the Soul guilty, and defiled; how is it possible, it should *delight in*, or desire communion with an Holy God, exercise any strong *Faith*, and *Hope* in *that God*, who hath declared his wrath against sinners; or care to draw near to God, when it apprehendeth God looking upon it afar off, with an angry countenance? This is another thing, which maketh this motion of Divine Providence reasonable, that God by it may punish the failings, errors, and miscarriages of People.

4. Fourthly. It appeareth reasonable upon the *Consideration of the great differences of Christians in their practise of Godliness.* The promises of *strength* are made to those that *wait upon the Lord for it.* Psal. 27. 14. *wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait I say on the Lord.* Isa. 40. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like the Eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.* Now it is true, every Child of God waiteth upon the Lord; but every one *waiteth not alike*, nor walketh with God to the same degree. Experience will tell every Christian, that the more strictly, and closely, and constantly he walketh with God, the stronger he groweth in all Duty. Infused habits are advantaged by exercise, as the fire that kindled the wood for sacrifices upon the Altar, first came down from Heaven; but then was to be kept alive by the care and labour of the *Priests*; so habits of *Spiritual Grace*, are indeed *infused from God*, yea and must also be maintained by daily influences from God, yet with a concurrence also of our own labour, in waiting upon God and exercising our selves unto Godliness; and the more a Christian doth so exercise himself, the more strong he shall grow, *Job.* 17. 9. *The righteous shall hold on in his way, and he that hath clean hands, shall add strength*, or, (as our translation reads it) *grow stronger, and stronger.* The more a man excelleth in *acts of Righteousness*, the more he *groweth in Spiritual strength*; ordinarily therefore, men, and women, which have *most communion with God* and *walk more closely with him*, have *most strength to Spiritual Duties.*

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5. Christians differences in *Knowledge*, and *Experiences of God*, is one great reason of their *differences, as to Spiritual strength.* 1. Their difference in *Knowledge*: our *external acts of Piety* (such as *Prayer*) as to the *true, and excellent performance of them*, do depend upon our *internal motions* towards God: as is our *Faith*, our *Love*, our *Hope*, so will our fervency in *Spirit*, in *Prayer*, and the *exercises of our Faith or hope*, or any other grace be; for those inward habits are the principles from which our actions flow, the *powers* which in action we exert, and put forth. Now these inward workings of our Souls do very much depend upon our *knowledge*; It is true they are not the *Natural* and *necessary fruits, or consequents* of *knowledge*. *Knowledge* must be sanctified before it will produce any such *effects*; many a one hath a large knowledge of *God*, of the holy Scriptures, and whatsoever they reveal of God, to render him to the Soul a fit object to be *believed*, and *trusted in, loved, desired, delighted in.* But this is certain that without *knowledge* there can be no such *Exercises*. No man who is wholly ignorant of God, and the Scriptures, can breath after him, delight in him, hope in his mercy, trust in his promises. *&c.* Some *knowledge* is necessary to the working of any of these habits, and the motions of these habits, will be proportionable to the degrees of Christian knowledge; Hence you shall observe that Christians who are *weak in knowledge*, are always *weak in faith, weak in an hour* of *Temptation, indeed* weak as to the *Exercises of all Spiritual gracious habits.* Now that there is a vast difference in Christians knowledge, and understanding of the holy Scriptures, is a thing of evident demonstration. 2. Secondly as there is a great Difference in Christians, as to their *intellectuals*, upon intelligence from which our wills, and *Affections* move; so there is yet a *greater difference* in their *Experiences* of God. The Apostle telleth us, *Rom.* 5. That *tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience*; and *experience hope.* Experience is a mighty advantage to divers exercises of grace, especially those of *faith, and hope.* 1 Sam. 17. *David* telleth *Saul*, wondering that he being so young a stripling, should dare to encounter *Goliah*: That he had *kept his Fathers sheep, and there came out a Lion and a Bear, and took a Lamb out of the flock* v. 36. *Thy Servant slew both the Lion and the Bear, this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them:* his experience of Gods protecting him from the *Lion* and the *Bear*, begot in him a confidence in God, that he would also deliver him

him from the Philistine: thus *Paul* with the same breath, with which he said, *God had delivered*, saith also *and shall deliver*; now that Christians of more experiences, should have more strength and confidence, is but the natural working of mans Soul.

6. *Sixthly*, God doth often by the withdrawings of the assistance of his Grace, *punish too great adventurousness*, and *presumption of our own strength* (this falleth properly under the third head, but being forgot there, I shall add it here.) This I take to have been the Case of *Peter*, when Christ told his Disciples they should all forsake him; *Peter* tells him, that *if he died with him he would not deny him.* He adventureth into the *High-Priests Hall* after his Master, and proves not strong enough, to resist the temptation of a Silly Damosel, Charging him to have been one of Christs Disciples. God often punisheth thus mens leading themselves into Temptation, adventuring upon precipices, when he hath commanded them to abstain from all appearances of Evil, and to *give no advantage to the Adversary.* It is said that *God will teach the humble*, and that he will *give grace to the humble*, whiles *he resisteth* and *sets himself in Opposition to the proud.* Much more might be said, to justifie the wisdom and reasonableness of the motions of Divine Providence in not giving equal degrees of *strengthening grace*, to those who are his own people. Before I come to the Application of this discourse, I shall speak to the two other Questions relating to *Quickening*, and *Consolatory grace*; because almost the same things will justifie the wisdome of God, in them, and the same Application will fit them all.

Quest. 3. *Whence is it that all have not the like measures of Quickening Grace.*

There is a 3 fold *Quickening* of which you read in holy Scripture. 1. The *Quickening* of a *dead body. That which thou sowest* (saith Christ) *is not Quickened except it die.* 2. *There is the Quickening of Souls dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. 2. 1. Neither of these is that which I here intend. 3. There is a *Quickening*, which is but the adding of *further life and vigour*, to a living *Soul.* Thus *David* prays the Lord, *Quicken me in thy way*; that man or woman that is not *dead in trespasses and sins*, may yet labour under a *great dulness and deadness*, to the *Operations of a*

Spiritual life; nor is there any thing more evident than that as to this, there is a great variety amongst Christians, yea in the Spirit of the same *Christian* at different times: the Souls of good people often find another kind of freedome, and livelyness in Spiritual duties, than they do at other times: now whence this is, is a question not unworthy to be answered, the sweetness of a Christians life very much depending upon it.

1. To which I must answer, (as to the other) that this also is often caused from the *temperature*, or from the *distemper of the body*, and that more generally than either of the other before mentioned; for though there be nothing more true, than that a Christian of an healthy temper and constitution, may yet complain of this spiritual *distemper*, and find his heart *dead* and *dull* enough to spiritual things; yet it is rare for a Christian under bodily distemperatures, especially such as affect the *head*, or any of the *vital parts*, to find himself as at other times, as to his duties, especially some duties of communion with God. There is such a close relation of our *souls* to our *bodies*, that their distemperatures do mutually affect each other: the *distemperatures of the mind*, either through *immoderate* fear, or sorrow, do often very much *affect the body*; and again, the *distemperatures of the body*, do often very much *affect the mind*; and this *dulness*, *ineptitude* to, and *heaviness* in its Religious performances, is one of the *first evils* with which the *soul* is so affected: and indeed this makes one of the greatest difficulties which the spiritual Physician meeteth with, to make up a true judgment, *whether the disorder and distemperature which he meeteth with oft-times in disturbed souls, be originally in the mind, or only there reflexively* by a *sympathy* with a *distempered body*, for accordingly applications must differ: and where this *dulness*, and *heaviness* is an *effect* of a bodily disease, it very often removeth with the cure of that.

2. But it is not so always. The *guilt of sin*, hath also a great *causation here*: For it is neither reasonable to imagine, nor indeed possible to be, that a soul burdened in its Conscience with the load and guilt of sin, should *run the ways of Gods Commandments*, as chearfully, and as fast as that soul, who through grace hath been inabled to cast this burthen upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and comfortably, at least, to hope, that its iniquities are forgiven, and

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its sins covered; much less, as that soul who walketh in the more clear Vision of God, and under the full assurance of the pardon of its sins, and its acceptation with God. A soul continually pull'd back by Conscience, and told, that it is a *guilty person* whom God accepteth not, cannot possibly make *such haste without delayings*, as another soul to keep Gods Commandments. The guilty soul therefore, is but an heavy moving Soul in Spiritual performances. Nay, thirdly, The *tempted*, *the deserted Soul*, though its *temptations*, or *desertions*, *be not the punishment of Sin*, *but only probatory of grace*, *cannot be so free*, and *lively*, as *another Soul*: and if it be but a just and reasonable motion of Providence, to let *Satan* sometimes *stand at a Christians right hand*, and be continually *buffeting it* for a season, and to withdraw from some Soul, the influences of *strengthning*, and *consolatory grace*; It cannot be unreasonable to leave it under some *Spiritual deadness and dulness*, which are but the proper consequents, and effects of the other: how can any one imagine that a Soul continually *moved* to some sinful actions, and possibly so violently moved, as the Soul knoweth not how to deny the motion, should find as much freedom, and chearfulness in the service of God, as a Soul under no such incumbrance; or that a Soul, under doubts, and fears, and jealousies of Gods favour to it, and its acceptance with God, should at the same time enjoy the like freedom in the service of God, and unto Spiritual duty, as that Soul which walketh (as at Noon-day) in the full, and brightest light of Gods countenance, and under the fullest confirmations of the love of God unto it.

4. Fourthly, The *freedom*, and *liveliness* of a Soul, to, and in *Spiritual duty*, doth also much depend upon its *freedom*, from *entanglements*, and *businesses* of an *Heterogeneous Nature*. 1. The Soul of a man hath not an infiniteness in its powers; if they be eagerly working, and busily exercised this way, they cannot be as eagerly, and busily exercised another way, which is quite of another nature. Christ hath told us, that *no man can serve two Masters*. No man can serve *God and Mammon*. That is, eagerly, and intensly serve both; he will serve the one, and neglect, or despise the other: you never knew one deeply ingaged, and intangled in worldly concerns, *freely*, *lively*, and *active* in the service of God; busnesses, and cares of the World are

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like thick clay, which clog the Chariot-Wheels of the Soul and keep it from moving nimbly. The Soul then acteth most lively and freely, when it is most sequestred from *the World*, and the concerns of it. Souls in *separation* serve God with the greatest *freedom*, *alacrity*, *and chearfulness*, as well because in that state they are freed from the cares, and businesses of the World, as from the impediment of the Body, by whose *Organs* they act, while they continue in a state of conjunction with it. These now are some of the chief causes of this difference in Souls as to this freedom, and liveliness, in the service of God; now God giving these influences of grace also in the way, and use of means, and dispensing his grace according to the circumstances of the Soul receiving it (I mean his dispensations of further grace, and manifestations of himself unto the Souls of those who are his own People) while there are in the World, Souls under such different circumstances, as according to an order of Nature and reason, they cannot be so free, and lively as others in their Spiritual operations; Gods inequal distribution of these dispensations, must needs appear exceeding just and reasonable: and thus much may serve to have spoken as to these. I proceed to a Fourth *Question*.

4. Quest. *Whence is the variety of Gods dispensations of consolatory grace?* *Consolatory grace* is that *dispensation of Grace*, by which the Souls of such as fear God, are filled with *joy*, and peace: The Psalmist telleth us, That *light is sown for the righteous*, *and joy for the upright in heart*: Every child of God hath a *right to* a *joy* and *peace*, for joy and peace in the heart, and conscience, is but the *Copy* of a *peace* with God. Now every Child of God, hath *peace with God*. For that is the immediate product of justification; *Rom.* 5. 1. *Being justified by Faith*, *we have peace with God.* But a *jus ad rem*, *a right to peace*, is one thing, that every Believer hath; a *jus in re*, or an actual possession of this joy, and peace is another thing. The light that is sown for them, doth not always shine; the *peace* that is for them in the *Fountain*, is not always in their Souls *as a River*, making glad their hearts. Christ hath left them *Peace* as a Legacy, *John* 14. 27. *Peace I leave with you*, *my peace I give unto you*; but as *Legacies*, are ordinarily left to be paid at different times, and oft-times upon certain conditions, which

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not being performed, the payment of the Legacy is withheld, or deferred: So it is as to this Legacy.

There is nothing more certain, than that consolations of the Soul, are the influences of the Spirit of God, for he is upon this account called the *Comforter*; and they are the *effluxes* of *special grace*, for *there is no peace to the wicked* (saith my God;) it is but an *ignis fatuus*, or a false fire, which sometimes *flasheth in the face of an Hypocrite*. For all peace of Conscience, being (as I said before) but a *Transcript* in our Consciences of the peace our Souls have ratified with God, and confirmed in the Heavens; a Soul whose iniquities are not forgiven, is not *subjectum capax*, a subject capable of this inward joy and peace, which is consequent to believing, and although not inseparable from it, yet never but subsequent to it. It is our unhappiness to live in times, when all the influxes of *special grace are denied by some*; so that it is no wonder, if some make a mock of these *Divine consolations*, and will allow no other Operations, to relieve sad, and comfortless Souls, than conclusions from *Reason*, either working upon Natural, or *revealed Principles*; taking no notice of the Spirit of Gods influence, 1. *Either to inable the Soul, to make such Applications, and conclusions from true Premises*; Or 2. Further to *elevate, and raise up the Soul, beyond the force of these Principles*. But be their Sentiments what they will, and their Discourses sutable to their Principles as they will; we know that the *Holy Spirit*, is not for nothing: called a Comforter. That we Read of the *Consolations of God*, *Job* 15. 11. And that God is called, *The God of Consolation*, and he that *hath given us everlasting Consolation*: That, in the midst of *Davids* perplexing thoughts, they were Gods *comforts*, which *refreshed his Soul*, *Psalm* 94. *v.* 19. That it is God, who *comforteth those that are cast down*, 2 Cor. 7. 6. *And who comforteth us in all tribulation*, 2 Cor. 1. 4.

But it is as certain, that the *consolations of all Souls*, even those who are true Believers, are not equal; nay, the same believing Souls are not always under the same consolatory influences of *Divine grace*. *David* himself crieth out, why art thou cast down, *O my Soul*? *Why art thou so disquieted* within me? the instances of *Job*, *Heman*, *Asaph*, *David*, stands upon

upon a Scriptural Record; but if we had not them, the experiences which we have every day of believing Souls (if we can make any Judgment of Believers) do sufficiently evince this to our Souls: my business is to inquire the *Justice*, and the reasonableness of the motions of Divine Providence in the inequality of this distribution. This will easily appear to you upon three *hypotheses*, which I take to be all very true.

1. *That God doth ordinarily dispense out these influences of grace, to souls which by his Providence he hath prepared for them.* This which I call Gods Providential preparation of souls, for the reception of these influences, I conceive lies chiefly in Two things; 1. The *freedom of it from those bodily incumbrances, which in a natural working make the soul sad, heavy and dejected*: such distempers we know there are, as in a natural working sadden the spirit, and fill it full of fear, sorrow, dejection, and despondency, which are all contrary to the comforts and serenity of a soul; and, as I have once and again told you, it must be a miraculous operation, contrary to the bias, tendency and natural operations of a man, for a soul to be filled with consolations, while it is influenced with a body lying under these disadvantages: God therefore, when he intendeth any of these consolatory influences, doth ordinarily prepare the soul for it, by delivering it from those influences of an ill affected body, which dispose it quite another way.

2. A second way, by which God prepareth the soul for it, is by *filling it with knowledg proportionable to it*; for the *comforts* of a gracious soul are not irrational and unaccountable things, but the results of *Scriptural conclusions*, which the soul is by the *Comforter* inabled to make. God hath in his Word sown the seed of light and joy for them; the Ministers of the Gospel (who are the Interpreters of Scripture) have an Office and Ministery in the Interpretation of this Word, and working the souls of Gods people to understand the sense of them. The soul it self hath an action in it using its reason and natural powers to conclude from the Scripture. The Holy Spirit giveth unto the soul to see the things *which are freely given it of God*, 1 Cor. 2. and further possibly, setteth to its Seal, and giveth it a further and more undoubted confirmation; so as in an ordinary working, the *comforted soul* must be a knowing and understanding soul: It is true, we sometimes find some ho-

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neſt ſouls full of joy and peace, whoſe knowledg doth not appear proportionable; God ſo relieving ſome particular ſouls, after their lying under the diſcouragements of the ſpirit of bondage: But commonly ſuch comforts are not of long continuance, rather preſent reliefs to the ſoul from an extraordinary working of the bleſſed Comforter, than any ſettled conſolation, and the abidings of the Comforter with them. Seldom any but knowing and judicious Chriſtians, have a ſettled and continued joy and peace upon their believing.

2. Secondly, That *God doth ordinarily give out theſe diſpenſations more or leſs, or nothing of them; though, not according to the merits of thoſe ſouls that have them, yet according to their behaviour, and miſbehaviour towards him:* That famous promiſe, *John* 14. 21. *We will manifeſt our ſelves unto him,* is made to thoſe that love Chriſt, and *who keep his Commandments:* And when *Judas* asks him, *Lord! How is it that thou wilt manifeſt thy ſelf to us, and not unto the world;* Chriſt, anſwereth him, ſaying, ver. 23. *If any man love me and keepeth my ſayings, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him: He that loveth me not, keepeth not my ſayings,* as much as to ſay, The reaſon why I manifeſt my ſelf more to you, is becauſe you love me, and demonſtrate that love to me, by *keeping my Commandments:* For *the world they love me not,* and proclaim that they love me not, by their diſobedience to my Commandments; and therefore it is, that I do not manifeſt my ſelf to the world, as I do unto you. In the receiving of the firſt grace, *man is meerly paſſive,* and the ſubject of preventing and operating grace; but as to the receptions of further grace, the child of God is *active,* and the ſubject of *cooperative, adjuvant, and aſſiſting grace,* and God gives out his aſſiſtances according to their motions.

3. Laſtly, The reaſonableneſs of this different diſpenſation may appear in this: *That in the diſpenſations* of this *grace,* God acteth often by *Prerogative, ſhewing mercy where he will ſhew mercy.* Indeed he doth ſo as to the *firſt grace,* as I have before at large ſhewed you: But now he doth not ſo as to theſe influences of grace, which are neceſſary to the upholding of the myſtical union between Chriſt and the Soul, and the upholding of a Chriſtians ſpiritual life; if he did, it were poſſible that a child of God might

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fall away from his state of grace, and there might be an intercision of the state of Justification: But Christ hath told us, *That if any man drink of the water which he shall give him, he shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well-spring of living water, springing up in his soul to eternal life*, &c. so that in the dispensation of that, God acteth upon a *Covenant*, and as a *debtor to his promise*. If any one saith, God hath also promised *to manifest himself unto his people*: I answer, those promises are made to those *that love him and keep his Commandments*; but for the upholding of the spiritual life, *he hath made a Covenant with his people*, as that he will *never depart from them to do them good*; so that *he will put his fear into their hearts, that they shall never depart from him*: which promise, although it be not to be extended to a being kept from all sin, yet it is to be extended to the preservation of souls from such degrees of sinning, as shall extend to the alteration of the state of the soul, and the extinguishing the *spiritual life*, and killing the seed of God in the soul. But for those manifestations of grace, which are not necessary to a souls Salvation, and the upholding of spiritual life; in it God acteth more freely according to the counsel of his own Will, derected by his own infinite Wisdom. Now upon these Hypotheses, supposing that all Christians are not of equal degrees of *knowledg*, nor are equal as to their bodily circumstances; that every soul that belongeth to God, doth not walk up to an equal degree of duty; but some may be, and are guilty, of more, and more eminent failings than others: Or that God may be by his infinite Wisdom directed, to *try* one soul more than another, to prove their patience, or their *faith*, which is most tryed; when his people have least sensible consolations; the motions of Divine Providence, in distributing to several Christians, nay, to the same Christians, several degrees of consolatory influences of grace, cannot seem either unjust, or unreasonable to any sober and intelligent Christians. This is all I shall speak to this Question, I proceed to the Fifth Question.

5. Quest. *Whence it is, that there are such manifest differences in Christian growth in grace?*

There is a *growth in spiritual gifts*, and a *growth in gracious habits*, and these must be carefully distinguished; for from a want of a just distinguishing these, many doubts and mistakes arise concerning this point of *growing in grace*; there may be *the one*, and a

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great increaſe and growth in them, where there is nothing either of the beginnings or *increaſe* of *the other*. By *ſpiritual gifts*, I *underſtand* thoſe *powers* by which *perſons* are inabled to ſome *more external ſpiritual operations*. You read much of them in the Firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*. Theſe are uſually diſtinguiſhed into *Extraordinary*, ſuch were the *gifts of Tongues*, *Prophecy*, *Healing*, *Interpretation*, *&c.* Which God was pleaſed to deal out in the *Infancy* of the *Church*, both to ſupply the want they had of *ordinary means*, and alſo to give a *reputation* to, and *to confirm the Doctrine of the Goſpel*. The *Goſpel* having got a larger *footing* and *acceptance* in the World, needed not theſe aids to its *reputation*, nor ſuch miraculous confirmations; theſe therefore ſoon ceaſed, and have rarely, if at all, been ſince given out. But there are *other gifts* that are more ordinary, and of conſtant and daily uſe in the *Church of God*; ſuch are the *gift of Prayer*, of *Preaching*, of *Spiritual Conference*, *&c.* Now Chriſtians are capable of growth and increaſe in theſe.

But beſides theſe, there are *gracious habits*; which are *powers* and *abilities* in the *ſoul*, inabling it to *acts* of *more ſecret and inward communion with God*: Such as *Faith*, *Love*, and others. And theſe are capable of *increaſe*, if not in their number, yet in their *degrees of intention*: Hence the Apoſtles pray, *Lord increaſe our faith*. And this left room for the Apoſtle to pray for the *Corinthians*, 2 *Cor.* 9. 10. *That the Lord would increaſe their fruit of righteouſneſs*; and for the *Theſſalonians*, that the Lord would *make them to increaſe*, and that they might increaſe more and more; 1 *Theſſ.* 3. 12. 4. 10. Thus you read of an *increaſing with the increaſe of God*; *Col.* 2. 19. and of the proſpering of the ſoul; 3 Ep. *John* v. 2. and the Apoſtle *Peter* exhorteth thoſe to whom he writeth, to *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*. This *growing in grace*, is not without the ſpecial influence of God: Thence it is that both the Apoſtles pray for it. Chriſt is both the Author and the Finiſher of our Faith. Now it is apparent that this growth in grace is not equal in all the ſouls of them who are the children of God; as we ſee in that which is born of the fleſh, ſome children grow faſter than others; ſo is it true as to thoſe that are born of God, *born of the ſpirit*, they all grow, but ſome grow much faſter than others grow; and the

thriving and prospering of their souls is much more evident to the world. In this also the actual providence of God hath its hand. Let me, before I shut up this Discourse, attempt to give you an account of this, to shew the reasonableness of this motion of Divine Providence; and that in this the wayes of God are equal.

1. I shall onely in this Case premise this: That there may be *great mistakes as to growth of grace*. I shall instance in two: 1. *Some may mistake a growth and increasing in spiritual gifts*, or *moral habits*, for a *growth in grace*. A man may so mistake himself, and his neighbours may so mistake him. *Spiritual gifts* are glistering things, and often dazle our eyes. We hear men mightily improved in their abilities fitly to express their own and others wants unto God in prayer, and to implead them with proper arguments. We hear a Minister improved in preaching, an ordinary Christian improved in his knowledge of spiritual things, and his utterance and ability to maintain a profitable discourse; we are perfectly apt to conclude these persons are *grown in grace*, and *it may be so*; but withal it may not be so too: for these are separable from any thing of truly gracious habits, which are the in-dwellers in a regenerate and sanctified heart. When the Apostle had been perswading the Corinthians to covet the *best gifts*, he by and by telleth them, *That he will shew them a more excellent way*. What was that? The way of *special distinguishing grace*, *love to God*; without which he telleth them in the beginning of the next Chapter, that all *gifts*, all *action*, all *suffering*, *prophecying*, *speaking with tongues*, *knowledge of all mysteries*, *giving all his goods to the poor*, and *his body to be burned*, would signifie nothing but a little noise in the world, and render him no more than as *sounding brass* and a *tinkling cymbal*.

2. Secondly, As some may judge they are grown in grace, because they are grown in gifts; so *others may judge they are not grown in grace*, when indeed they are. And the common mistake here, is mens calling nothing a *growth in grace*, but *further passion* and *intention of the Affections*; when as the truth is, as we say concerning Women (the Apostle you know calls them *the weaker Vessels*) yet they have the strongest passions: So it is true concerning Christians, those that are the *weakest Christians* have the strongest Affections and Passions. Conformably

formably to this, it is ordinarily observed, That *Christians* usually in the beginning of their *Conversion*, have the *strongest Affections*, the most passionate *grief for sin*, the most unsatisfied pantings and breathings after God and his Ordinances; but at this time weaker and less confirmed habits of Faith, of *Self-denial*, and *Mortification*; and are more easily than afterward, turned aside by a temptation. But these mistakes being easily obviated, I easily grant it, That there are real differences, as to Christians increase, progress, and growth in grace; of which I shall now come to give you a short account:

1. I might tell you, *That all growth supposeth time.* It is a motion that is not in an instant. *Adam* was the onely man that God brought into the World at a perfect Age, others you know come into the World little Children, and are perfected, and grow up by degrees; and as the *first Adam* was the onely man, who came into the World perfect as to natural parts and growth. So *Jesus Christ*, the second *Adam*, was the onely man that at first appeared to the World perfect in grace; for in him the *fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.* All others are first Babes, then stronger ones, and perfected by degrees. So long therefore as there is a successive Conversion and bringing of souls to God, there must be Christians in the World of different sizes and statures, as to growth, and increase in grace. But yet this is not a perfect account of this variety, for all Christians of the same standing in the ways of God, are not of the same proficiency and stature in them.

2. Secondly, therefore, *One great cause may be a difference in spiritual nourishment.* Though it be true in Bodies, that all who are fed with the same bread, and drink the same drink, do not thrive alike; yet suppose a body to be fed with improper food, or not to have half enough, it is no great wonder if it doth not grow so fast as another body that hath a plenty of food, and that food too which is good and proper for it. It is the same case with the soul, that also must have *its food.* The souls food is the *Scriptures, Ordinances, Influences.* For the first indeed we have them, we have them in our own language; so that we can understand them: but yet every one cannot *read* (an inexcusable fault in Parents and

such as have the government of youth, especially in the age wherein we live;) nor have all the like means of having them read to them, and being made to understand them. But the great difference lies in Ordinances; St. *Peter* adviseth Christians *to desire* like *New-born Babes*, the sincere milk *of the Word, that they might grow thereby.* He (doubtless) speaketh of the Word preached, the Promise, *Psal.* 92. 13. is, *Those that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God.* The House of the Lord is the Church of the Lord, and there is a promise of growth to all those that are planted in it; yet as in our Gardens and Fields, there are different sorts oft-times; so in the Church of God (which is a large Field) there are different soils for Christians: There is a great deal of difference in that preaching under which Christians sit, One man preacheth in the *inticing words of mans wisdom, another in the perswasive words of mans wisdom*; another in the evidence and *demonstration of the spirit and with power.* Some Christians possibly live, where they scarce ever hear a good Sermon, but some *Harangues* of *Oratory*, or some rational Philosophical Discourses, of which they understand little or nothing: Others live under *plain, lively, powerful* preaching; where the Preacher makes it his business to study the souls of his people, and proportioneth his preaching accordingly: so as the *Babes have their milk* and others their *stronger meat.* Teaching them as they are able to receive instruction. It is no wonder if such Christians who are under the best means, be found most thriving; God working in the use of means, where means can be had. It is true, Christ once (and never but once that we read of) *made use of clay and spittle* to cure the blind mans eyes. And when our Lord was himself upon the Earth, attending his own Garden, and the Plants in it, though he had a fulness of wisdom and power too, and *had many things to say unto them*; yet saith he, *John* 16. 12. *you are not able to bear them now.* And it is said *Mark* 4. 33. *With many such parables spake he the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it.* Now if Christians live under preachers, who either make no conscience what they preach unto people, but fill up their time either with idle Fables, or Invectives against Parties, or some florid or Philosophical Discourses; as if their study were direct-

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ly contrary to that of the *Apoſtles*, whoſe great care (as he tells us) was ſo to order his preaching, as the faith of his hearers might not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God: Now their preaching ſeems to be ſo directed and ordered, as that the *faith of their hearers* might not reſt in the *power of God*, but *in the wiſdom of men*. It is no wonder if ſuch Chriſtians do not grow in grace in proportion with others, who live under more adequate and proper means. God uſeth not ordinarily to work miracles, and their ordinary ſpiritual food is not proportioned to any ſuch thing as the ſpiritual proficiency of thoſe that hear them.

2. Secondly, A great reaſon of this difference lieth alſo in *the differing natural tempers of Chriſtians*. Amongſt other *Metaphors* by which the *Holy Ghoſt* expreſſeth the *Converſion* and *Regeneration* of ſouls by, that of *Engraffing* is one; *Rom.* 11. 17. 19. 23, 24. The ſoul is ingrafted into Chriſt. Now thoſe who are skilled in planting, know that according to the different nature of the plant, the growth is faſter or ſlower, more or leſs. Some plants grow much more freely than others; a *Cion* of one ſort of fruit, will ſhoot up as much in one year, as a Cion of another ſpecies will ſhoot in two or three years. Truly it is ſo in the Spiritual Plantation, *Chriſt is the Stock*, into which we are all ingrafted; there is no fault there: but now the *Cions* that are ingrafted into Chriſt, are not all of the ſame nature and temper. And although *Grace* makes a great change and alteration, and doth much correct a natural temper; yet it doth not root out Nature, nor work the change in a moment; nor in all the ſame proportion of time. There are *ſeveral tempers*, which much hinder the appearance of *growth in grace*. Some are naturally of *vain*, *airy*, *light ſpirits*; ſome of *proud* and *high ſpirits*; ſome of *froward*, *teachy*, *paſſionate*, *ſtubborn ſpirits*. Others are naturally of more *ſolid*, *ſerious tempers*; of more *low* and *humble*; of more *meek* and *pliable ſpirits*: Now where it happens that there is a change wrought in ſome perſons of airy and light ſpirits, or ſuch as are proud and high, or froward, and paſſionate and ſtubborn, a progreſs and growth in habits and exerciſes of grace, will not be ſo ſoon evident and apparent, as in thoſe ſouls that are of ſweeter and more gentle and ductile ſpirits: Much grace will make

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but a little shew, where there is an ill natural temper and humor.

3. Thirdly, *An ill neighbourhood doth make a great deal of difference in the growth of grace.* We see in Plants, an ill neighbourhood of Plants doth much hinder growth. There is scarce any Plant will thrive much near an *Ash*; the like might be observed of other Trees, which experience tells us are ill neighbours to Plants. Rake up Fire in Ashes, if it keepeth alive it is all. It is so with Christians that are ill-yoaked, that live in ill Families or Neighbourhoods. There is some Wood they call *Quench-coal* (Rotten Wood is mostly so.)

The truth is, the company of all carnal worldly men, is of that nature; they are all *Quench-coals* to the *life of Grace*, and discourage that holy fire which the Spirit of God hath kindled in the souls of his people. If a Christian be engaged in such society, whether necessarily, as in *Conjugal relations*, and indeed in most Domestick relations, or voluntarily: if such a Christian *keeps his sincerity*, it will be well, it can hardly be expected that the profiting of such Christians should appear unto all; or indeed that they should grow in proportion unto other Christians, who are engaged in a better converse; and are under the daily Instructions, Exhortations, Reproofs and Admonitions of others; who as Brethren take themselves concerned to consider them, and to provoke them unto love and good works. Yet it is observable that such Christians do grow by a kind of spiritual *Antiperistasis*, as they say the fire is hottest in the coldest weather; so we often see, that there is a great warmth and zeal against sin and for God, nourished in those souls, which have been most smothered and choaked with ill relations and company; which discovereth it self, as soon as those persons are freed from those intanglements and incumbrances; but while they are troubled with them, this growth is not so evident, nor do we constantly find Grace thriving under such ill shadows; so prone are our corrupt natures to receive contrary impressions: and nothing so much as converse exposing us to the reception of them. So that this is like an ill air to the Body, which often hindreth the growth of it.

4. Fourthly, *As the growth of the Body is hindred by some diseases,*

diseases, the growth of a plant by some *canker*, or some ill winds, or by the check which it may have by the bitings of some beasts. So may the growth of Grace in the Soul be much hindered: 1. By the *prevailings of some particular corruptions.* 2. Or by the wounds which the *Soul receiveth from some temptations.* It is true, There are some sicknesses in which persons shoot out, and by which they are rather advantaged than hindered in their growth; but there are other habituated distempers which hinder the growth of young persons. There is no prevailing corruption but giveth a check to a growth in Grace, though sometimes the prevailing of it, doth by accident, promote Grace in its exercise; as it was with the *Corinthians*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. But prevailing Lusts do wonderfully hinder proficiency in Grace. To instance but in that one lust of *Earthly mindedness*, Let but an earthly, covetous mind, prevail upon any, it is a wonderful thing to observe how it checks all spiritual progress; it betrayeth a Christian to so many practical errors, both of omission and commission, that his neighbour standing by, and observing him, cannot but cry out in the words of the Apostle; *How dwelleth the love of God in this man?* Though they see much in him which disposeth them to charitable thoughts, and makes them that they cannot but conclude he is one that *feareth God*, yet they know not how to reconcile the actions of his life to what the Scripture speaketh of the nature of grace. Yea, and *long* and *violent temptations*, do also much hinder the *souls growth*. They are like cold winds or the bitings of beasts to the plants, which discourage the growth of them; though they be not internal causes, yet they are external causes of the plants unthriftiness. So it is with *long* and *violent temptations*, they indeed do not work as internal causes (I mean such temptations as are *ab hoste*, from our grand adversary) to hinder a Christians growth; but they are great external causes, discouraging the soul in almost all its exercises of Communion with God, and applications of it self unto him.

5. Lastly, Any *Desertions*, or *with-drawings of divine influences*, *are great causes.* There are few plants which grow much in the shade, ordinarily the *influences of heaven*, both of the *Sun* and the *Rain*, are necessary to the growth of the plants.

plants. I am ſure the influences of *the Sun of righteouſneſs*, are neceſſary to the ſpiritual growth of a good Chriſtian; and if they be with-drawn, though the ſoul may live, yet during the with-holdings of them, it will not much grow or thrive. The ſoul will live during the with-drawing of them; for I have once and again told you, that the Lord never withdraweth what of his ſpiritual influence upon the ſoul is neceſſary to uphold and maintain the ſpiritual union and life; but no ſoul flouriſheth and increaſeth much under ſuch a diſpenſation: it ſtandeth in the ſhadow, and wanteth thoſe beams, which are neceſſary to its bearing and bringing forth much fruit. Theſe now are the great cauſes of that variety which we diſcern in *Chriſtians Growth*; other cauſes might be aſſigned, but this is ſufficient, ſuppoſing God to have appointed the uſe of means, in order to a ſpiritual growth, and ordinarily to concurre with the uſe of thoſe means, to juſtifie Divine Providence, in not equally making every Soul to grow.

There is yet one Queſtion more, which indeed doth not properly concern this place, in which I am to diſcourſe concerning the *Reaſonableneſs of Divine Providence*, in the inequal diſtributions of ſpecial diſtinguiſhing Grace; yet I ſhall ſpeak ſomething too, *viz.*

6th. Queſt. *Whence it is that good People have ſuch different Apprehenſions of the Truth of God?*

1. That which makes the difficulty in the Apprehenſion of this, is: 1. Partly, Becauſe there is but *one Truth*, *one Faith*, as well as *one God*, *one Baptiſm*, &c. Two contradictory Propoſitions cannot be true, nor can both proceed from the God of Truth; for the ſame Fountain doth not ſend forth *bitter Water* and *ſweet*. One and the ſame God cannot ſpeak different things; God is Truth, and every Truth is from God; no lie, no falſhood, cannot poſſibly be from God.

2. Partly, Becauſe all the People of God have the ſame *Spirit of God*, which is called the *Spirit of Truth* dwelling in them, and are under the ſame Promiſe of this Holy Spirit, leading *them into all truth*, and the *Annointings*, *teaching them all things*.

3. Again,

3. Again, They have all the same *word of truth* to guide them, and to examine and *measure Propositions by*; they have the *Law* and the *Testimony*, and that is the Standard in the Market of Truth; the Touch-stone by which every Proposition is to be tryed, the Scale in which every Proposition is to be weighed.

Yet notwithstanding this, There is nothing more obvious than that, even such who (if we may judge any thing) do truly fear God, have strangely different apprehensions concerning Divine Truth, concerning the Sacraments, the use of the Law, the extent of the Death of Christ, the power of mans Will, the true notion of Faith, *&c.*

Now the question is, Whence this variety is, why God permitteth it, and how the motions of Divine Providence, in these things, may appear just and reasonable? I shut out of this Discourse, the different Apprehensions of *Carnal*, wicked, and ungodly men, whose *Creed* is commonly dictated by their lust; and their whole art and study is, because they cannot allow the conforming of their hearts to Divine Truth, to endeavour to interpret the Word of God into a sense consistent with their lusts; as also all such as the Apostle speaketh of, whom *because they received not the truth in the love of it, God gives up to strong delusions to believe a lie; that they may be damned because they have had pleasure in unrighteousness*: 2 *Thes.* 2. 9, 10, 11, 12. or because as the Astle speaketh, *Rom.* 1. *They have detained the truth of God in unrighteousness.* I say, for all these I shall shut them out of my Discourse, and onely inquire whence such as *truly love* and *fear God*, have such different Apprehensions; and wherein the motions of Divine Providence, in permitting of them, seem just and reasonable.

1. It first must be laid down for a Principle, *That the providence of God never doth nor can suffer any elect Soul to embrace and die in any belief of any Proposition, by the belief of which its Salvation may be endangered.* The Apostle telleth you of some that bring in *damnable Heresies.* Every Deviation from any *Doctrine of Truth is* an *Error*; but an Error is one thing, a *damnable Error* is another thing. There hath been a great deal of stir about *Fundamentals*, what *Truths* and *Errors* are *Fundamental*; I shall not engage my self in that Dispute,

but shall determine those *Fundamental Truths*, the belief of, or assent and agreement unto which, is *necessary, in order to such exercises of Faith and Holiness, without the exercise of which no man can be saved:* And those are *Fundamental Errors*, which a man cannot hold, and in the mean time exercise *that Faith and Holiness, without the exercise of which no man can be saved.* As now, supposing that *Faith in Jesus Christ* is necessary to Salvation; *A denial of the God-head of Christ* must needs be a fundamental Error: for *Cursed is he that trusteth in Man, and maketh Flesh his Arm*: The true and living God alone can be the object of our *Faith.* Now I do not say but a Child of God may fall in with, and for a time embrace such Errors. The Providence of God may permit him thus to fall, but it cannot, it doth not, suffer any of the Elect of God, to hold on and perish in the faith of any Propositions of this nature; for then the elect of God *might be deceived*, which our Saviour hath determined *impossible*; then a Soul ordained to Life, given to Christ, might perish eternally; which is not consistent with the certainty of Divine Purposes, and infallibility of Divine Decrees. Although therefore an elect Vessel may receive some such corrupt Liquor, yet it shall not, it cannot abide in it, though it may be for a time taken in such a snare of the Devil; yet the snare shall be broken, and it shall be delivered before it comes to leave the Body. The question onely must be concerning a mis-belief of other Propositions, a mis-belief of which is sinful, but not damnable.

And for those Promises of the Spirit leading the People of God into all Truth, and of the *Annointing, teaching them all things*, they must be interpreted of such Propositions as are necessary to be believed in order to the Salvation of the Soul; else *ignorance* of other Propositions, as well as *Error relating to them*, would argue men and women to be destitute of the Spirit of God, and not to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

2. Secondly, As to *Propositions of Truth*, that are not in this sense *fundamental*, the reason of the difference is very obvious, and that both upon a *Natural*, and a *Moral*, and *Spiritual* account. Upon, 1. *A spiritual account*, *Diverse* Propo-

Propoſitions of Truth of this nature, are not ſo clearly written in Scripture, that he who runneth may read them. It was I think *Auguſtines* ſaying of the Holy Scriptures, That there were divers parts of them, in which a *Lamb might wade*, others wherein an *Elephant may ſwim.* It is the great mercy of God to us, that thoſe Propoſitions of Truth, which are neceſſary to be agreed to, in order to the exerciſes of our *Faith* and Holineſs; are left in Scripture *ſo plain*, and ſo often repeated, that if a man will not ſhut his eyes and ſuffer his luſt to give law to his underſtanding, he muſt agree to them; but now divers other Propoſitions are not ſo, but ſo delivered, as that the truth of them is juſtly the ſubject of diſpute; and they are fit for a ventilation, and poſſibly muſt be concluded from conſequences. 2. Upon a *natural account.* Every one hath not the ſame quickneſs of Apprehenſion, the ſame ſtrength for ratiocination, and ability for rational and logical deductions. 3. Nor Thirdly (which is that which I meant by a moral account) *Hath every one the ſame helps and means, or capacity to uſe helps and means* to diſcern Truth from Error, and find out what indeed is the Truth, as to a Propoſition laid before him; ſo that although they have all the ſame Spirit of Truth dwelling in them, and the ſame Word of Truth to weigh and meaſure Propoſitions by, yet the Holy *Spirit* being no more engaged to keep them from every error of the underſtanding, than from every error of practice; and they not having the ſame faculty to apprehend Truth, nor the ſame means and advantages to underſtand the Mind and Will of God; it is not at all to be wondered if they have not all the ſame Apprehenſion of every Propoſition of Truth: nor is it to be expected that all Chriſtians ſhould have ſo, more than that they ſhould have all the ſame Faces. For Example, Take but the *Propoſitions* concerning *Infant Baptiſm*, I doubt not, no more I think do you that hear me, but that *Infants are to be baptized*; But how do we gather it? We have no expreſs Scripture for that more than for Womens *receiving the Lords Supper*; but we conclude it from the *identity of the Covenant of Grace* under the Old and New Teſtament, from the Precept for *Circumciſion*, from the right of Infants to the Kingdom of God; and many other ſuch

like *Topicks*. But every one hath not the same ability of Reasoning, nor the same Apprehensions of the force of Conclusions; and therefore *different Apprehensions* in that and such like Propositions, is not at all to be wondred at, nor are any to be condemned as not belonging to God for their different Apprehensions concerning them.

3. Thirdly, As to the *Act of Providence, permitting these different apprehensions, it cannot* be denied to be an Act exceeding reasonable, and the product of a Depth of Divine Wisdom. 1. *Reasonable, That man may act freely according to his nature in the choice, or refusal of Propositions.* 2. The *Product of great Wisdom.* 1. *For the further confirmation of the Souls of his People in the truth.* It is an usual saying, That there are no Propositions, which we more firmly believe, than those about which we have sometimes doubted. *Nihil magis certum, quam quod ex dubio certum est.* Truth receiveth a great confirmation, by the shakings of some Velitations and Disputes about it. It was the saying of an eminent person of our own Church, *That the itch of disputing was the scab of the Church*; and truly it hath proved so, but it hath been by accident: men coming to dispute, bringing as *Augustine* said of his own coming, sometimes to read the Scriptures, *Discutiendi acumen*, not *Discendi pietatem*; a sharpness of wit to discuss Points, not an humble pious desire to learn; arguing indeed for masteries, not for truth; to get themselves, not to get the truth and glory of God the Victory: but where Disputes are humbly and meekly managed, there is nothing imaginable of greater advantage to settle and ground the Soul in truth. For after them the Soul gives assent to Propositions, not as Dictates of others, and Traditions of men, but because it seeth certain and unmoveable grounds, upon which they are bottomed: and hears those things made to appear of no value, which are objected and can be said to the contrary; and so becomes *rooted and grounded in the faith* (as the Apostle speaketh.) Truth yet never lost in the end by any shaking, but hath come out of every field a Conqueror. *Magna est veritas, & prævalebit.* It is great and it will prevail at last. Different Apprehensions of Propositions, especially when they have been amongst such as truly feared God, have ordi-

ordinarily cauſed great ſearchings of the Scripture, ventilation of Arguments, and tended much to the furtherance of the Faith; although at preſent they have made but ill ſounds and noiſes in the Church of God.

2. The Wiſdom of God is much ſeen in permitting theſe *Diverſities*, To convince us that *The Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteouſneſs, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt: For he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God and approveable to Men*; *Rom.* 14. 17, 18. It is a great vanity in men to entail *Religion*, yea and the *Kingdom of Heaven* too, to a *particular opinion*; yet we are ſo vain, as we ſhould moſt certainly do it, if God by his Providence did not ſo order it that we ſhould ſee many, of whom we cannot ſay but that they fear God, and walk cloſely with him; yea, that they are more righteous than our ſelves, of different opinions and judgments from us in ſome particular things: you cannot but obſerve in the world, how fond and zealous, ſome perſons are for a particular opinion, more than for the great things of Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, which are certainly the far more weighty things of the Divine Law; and how warm and zealous, and bitter, men are, more againſt their Brethren, for their differences from them in ſome matters of opinion; wherein if they ſin, yet their ſins proceed from meer infirmity; and the weakneſs of their underſtandings muſt be ſins of the leaſt magnitude (for it is not in the power of man to believe what he will) than againſt thoſe that are open and notorious tranſgreſſors of the Law of God, in things as to which, every man is condemned by his own Conſcience.

3. Thirdly, The Wiſdom of God is much ſeen in the permiſſion of theſe different apprehenſions in the Souls of his own People, *In his thus directing us to the exerciſe of charity.* We uſe to ſay, That *Preecpts lead us to Duty*, but *Examples draw us.* There is no duty more preſſed upon us in Scripture, than the duty of *Charity* and *Brotherly Love*; nor any to which our hearts, prejudiced by *Pride*, *Envy*, and *Luſt*, are more awke: the heart of man naturally ſeeks ſome higher ground, on which he may ſtand and triumph over his Neighbour, and be able to ſay in this or that thing I am better; and *God! I thank thee*, I am *not as others are*; amongſt other

other things it sometimes finds an *Opinion*, which it *Christens* with the name of *Orthodox Catholick Truth*; and this shall distinguish him: all that dissents from him shall be *Hereticks*, or *Schismaticks*, or *Ignorant Persons*; he and his party onely shall make up the *Catholick Church*: others *know not the Law* (if you will believe him) and *are accursed*. Now though this may prevail very far with men of *Carnal Principles* and *Designs*, yet when Gods People see, that those who differ in some particular opinions from them, yet walk so as they dare not but say, *God hath loved and accepted them: this overcometh their hearts* into their duty. Should not (say they) we *love those* whom our *Heavenly Father* loveth? Who are *Sprinkled with the Blood of Jesus Christ*, as well as we; *Justified by the Grace of God*, and *Sanctified through the Holy Spirit*, even as we? It were an easie thing to assign many other things, wherein the Wisdom of God is apparent in this permission of different Apprehensions of Truth in the Souls of his own People; as to shew *us our weakness*, and the *imperfection of our state*, and what need we have to be daily flying to him to *teach us* and to *guide us*, &c. But this is sufficient, both to have given you a reasonable account of the thing it self, and also of the motion of Divine Providence, in the permission and allowance of it. I shall now shut up this whole Discourse with a few words more for the practical Application of my whole Discourse upon these five last Questions; which to shorten my Discourse I have handled together.

The sum of my whole Discourse is this, That God according to his infinite Wisdom never did, nor yet doth, unto the Souls of his own People, dispense out equal measures of Grace. 1. *Strengthening them* to Spiritual Duty. Nor 2. *Quickening them in the performance of it.* 3. Nor *Comforting* and refreshing their Souls with *the sensible consolations of his Spirit.* 4. *Nor causing them all alike to grow*, nor giving them equal degrees of light to discern the truth of Propositions of Truth; and then that these motions of Divine Providence are exceeding *reasonable*, and God in them is *infinitely wise and just*; the evidencing of this hath been all my Work: Which I have done from several Topicks. My whole Application shall be reduced to two Heads, shewing you how

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useful this Discourse may be for the promoting of, 1. *Charity towards men.* 2. *Of Piety towards God.* The later is indeed first in excellency. I have put it in the last place, because I intend my largest Discourse upon it; and with it to shut up this whole Discourse concerning *Actual Providence.*

This whole Discourse must certainly teach us *Charity towards men*; and that particularly toward such as we discern, 1. *Weak unto their spiritual duty.* 2. *More dull and heavy in the performance of it.* 3. *Sad and dejected.* 4. *Not growing so fast in the wayes of God as others.* 5. *That dissent from our selves in some matters, opinions, that are not fundamental.* Towards all these, we had need of an Exhortation to *Charity.* Censoriousnes and Judging, are things that are too natural to us; and to which we are too prone. We judge others, and in the mean time forget to judge our selves. All this is indeed rooted in a *Natural Pride.* We would fain find something in which we excel others, for that onely will be matter of boasting and glory to us; but this Discourse may learn us *Charity.* The general argument arising from this Discourse is the same which the Apostle maketh use of in *Rom.* 14. *v.* 3. *v.* 1. He commandeth us to *receive those that are weak in the faith*, though with prudence and caution, *not to doubtful disputations.* His argument is in the latter part of the third verse; *For God hath received him.* Certainly a very cogent argument. *Those whom God hath received into his favour*, into a fellowship and communion with him, no Christians ought to judge, despise, or reject; but God *receiveth such as are weak in the faith.* It is very absurd to think that a person should be fit for the *favour of God*, and for *fellowship with God*, and should not be worthy of, nor fit for fellowship with those who are the children and servants of God. The same argument holds and constraineth in all these Cases which I have been opening to you.

1. Use.

1. Seest thou therefore one, *Who is weak unto his spiritual duty*, and is often halting and complaining of his weakness, he is not able to resist his temptations, nor to get a Victory over his corruptions; the sons of *Zerviah* are too hard for him. He cryeth out with *David, Iniquities prevail against me.* He complains he cannot so fix his thoughts upon God, so keep up his *Faith* and *Hope* in God, as he desireth to do. *Do*

not

2. Use.

not despise, do not judge or condemn such a Christian; pity him, pray for him, help him what thou canst, but do not judge him; God may have *received him*, yea and hath received him, if his heart be but right and sincere with God: if the bent, scope, and design of his heart be for God, and his endeavour be a *pressing hard* after God; though he hath not yet attained. God must in his Family have Babes as well as grown Persons. In his Fold he must have Lambs as well as Sheep; the *Providence of God* hath so ordered it in infinite wisdom. He accepteth none according to their degrees in grace, but according to their truth in grace and sincerity. Remember, that thou also wert sometimes *weak*, and it is by grace if yet thou beest more strong; nay thou that art strong, mayest again be made *weak*. What art thou if God with-draweth his holy spirit from thee? If God letteth loose Satan against thee? Thus the Apostle, *Gal.* 6. 1. endeavoureth to perswade Christians to a charitable endeavour to restore such as are fallen, in the spirit of meekness; considering (saith he) *thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* See what the Apostle saith upon this head, *Rom.* 15. 1. *We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak; and not to please our selves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification; for even Christ pleased not himself.*

2. Secondly, Seest thou one that is under a divine desertion, as to the *quickening influences* of the spirit of God. He walks in the wayes of God, but he doth not move to them, nor in them, with that alacrity of mind; with that cheerfulness and livelines of spirit, that another doth; he complaineth that his *chariot wheels drive heavily*: He comes to duty, rather as a burthen and task, than with any *spiritual pleasure and delight.* As I said in the other case, so I say in this, if thou canst add any oil unto his wheels, do, but do not clog them more with thy rash censures and uncharitable judgement; thou doest not know what his soul suffers, how he already groaneth under this burthen, and is discouraged under this distemper; and therefore far be it from thee, to add affliction to his affliction. God hath *received this mans soul*, if he be sincere, if he be pressing after God under this burthen of affliction. God is not onely just in these dispensations of *Providence*, but he is wise also. Just he is, as he by them *punisheth*

niſheth his peoples ſins. (And art thou free from ſin, for the demerit of which thou mayeſt alſo fall under the like providence?) but he is wiſe alſo: Thereby humbling and proving his people, that he may do them good in the latter end; thereby quickening them to ſtir up themſelves to follow hard after God, and thereby alſo offering to thee opportunities for thy charity and brotherly help; a ſpiritual friend and brother being made for a day of trouble.

3. Thirdly, Seeſt thou a ſoul *walk heavily all the day long*, crying out as *David*, *Lord wherewith wilt thou comfort me?* He neither liveth in the bright and clear Viſion of God, nor yet in the perfect view of his own ſincerity; he is ſmitten of God and afflicted, and his ſoul *refuſeth to be comforted.* Here again is another object of thy charity, and poſſibly the greateſt object which the whole world affordeth; for there is no ſorrow like the ſorrow of that ſoul that walks heavily all the day long, crying out, *Where is my God become?* I ſhall not be large in perſwading pity and charity for ſuch poor ſouls, for he muſt not have the heart of a man, but of a beaſt, that doth not pity ſouls which are thus afflicted. You have heard, that there are many ſuch ſouls whom yet *God hath received.* God doth not equally diſtribute his diſpenſations of conſolitary grace, to all that truly love and fear him; no not to the ſame ſouls. Judge not anothers *truth of grace* by thy own *joy and peace*, if thy *joy and peace* be truly conſequent to thy believing, and the effect of faith in thy ſoul, and what Chriſt left to his Diſciples, it *will not be conſtant*, it hath not been alwayes the ſame; thou haſt alſo had thy ſad hours: if there be a difference in degrees, this concludeth nothing againſt thy brother. If therefore thou canſt ſpeak *a word in ſeaſon*, if thou canſt comfort another with the ſame comfort wherewith thy own ſoul hath been comforted heretofore of God, do it; but judge charitably of thy afflicted brother, upon whom the hand of God under theſe *diſpenſations*, *lieth very heavily.*

4. Fourthly, Seeſt thou another, *whoſe ſoul is not grown and thriven in grace to that degree that thine is*; his habits are not yet ſo confirmed, his joynts not ſo well knit; *exerciſe again thy charity*, if thou doeſt but ſee him *hold on his way*, though thou doeſt not ſee he groweth *ſtronger and ſtronger.*

God hath promiſed that he ſhall grow, he hath not promiſed that his *growth* ſhall be viſible unto thee: Remember you muſt give allowance both for the time he hath ſtood in the *Lords Garden*, and alſo for the means which God hath afforded him while he hath ſtood there. I obſerve that God judgeth of men with *allowance for their temptations*. *Behold* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *the Patience of Job*. The patience of *Job*? *Job* indeed did ſometimes ſhew much patience, but withal he diſcovered *eminent impatience*: Witneſs his third Chapter, where you find him curſing the day of his birth; and other parts of his Book, where he wiſheth for death, and complaineth ſeverely of Gods dealing with him; yet (ſaith God) *Behold the patience of* Job. *God meaſured* Job's *grace with his temptations*. If indeed *Job* had brake out into thoſe great errors and extravagancies of paſſion, not being under high and great temptations, he had ſhewed himſelf very impatient; but the Lord conſiders what temptations were upon his ſervant, and conſidering them, he pronounceth holy *Job* a very patient man. We muſt learn to judge as God judgeth, and particularly as to this point of *growth in grace*; we muſt judge of it according to the means and helps of grace which the perſon hath had, conſidering the *natural temper* of the perſon; as alſo his temptations and afflictions which he hath had to put him back, we muſt ſo judge of his growth and thrift. Poſſibly his circumſtances have been ſuch, as have neceſſitated him, in order to getting bread, to live in a Town, in a Family, where he hath ſcarce ever heard a good Sermon, nor hath had any means of Inſtruction; no good examples to go before him, and quicken him in the ways of God. Poſſibly he hath walked in the dark and ſeen no light, his life hath been a life of many afflictions, great temptations; thou haſt lived where thou haſt had a great plenty of ſpiritual food, all imaginable means to promote the work of God in thy ſoul. In ſuch caſes as theſe, thy brother is the object of thy pity and prayers, and all the charitable aſſiſtance thou canſt give him; but by no means of thy cenſure.

5. Laſtly, This Diſcourſe doth highly *ſolicite your charity*, for thoſe who differ in their *apprehenſions* of ſome *Principles of Religion* from you. And here (if any where) I had need plead

plead with you for *charity*; for although it be evident, that it is not in the power of a man to believe what he would, but the *assent* of the mind to a *Proposition*, must necessarily be according to the evidence of the truth of the thing which his understanding hath; yet it is matter of amazement to consider, what Feuds, what Alienations in Affection, are the products of *Differences in Opinion*: As if Heaven were entailed to Understandings of one Complexion. There alwayes were in the *Church of God*, and there alwayes will be, different apprehensions in some matters of Truth; and generally they have brought forth disorders (great disorders) in mens practice; each one hugging his particular opinion, as if he judged himself, and none but himself, *infallible*: And even *Protestants*, declaiming against an *Infallible Head* upon the Earth, will yet arrogate an Infallibility of Judgment unto themselves. When as nothing is more demonstrable, than that my brother hath as much reason to quarrel with me for differing from him, as I have to quarrel with him for his *differing from me*; unless he will say, *I cannot be deceived, but you may*; which would give a just foundation for the renewing of that old question of the false prophet, *Which way went the spirit of God from me to thee?* Doth any one say I have Scripture for my Opinion? So saith the other. Doth he say, *I think I am verily perswaded of it by the spirit of God?* So saith the other. Doth he say, *But I have divers learned and good men of my mind?* Truly there are not very many differences of any moment, but his brother may say the same. Will he say, *But the Church wherein I live is of my mind.* Be it so, this indeed should much regulate sober Christians, as to the publishing and divulging of their opinions, to the disturbance of others; but it ought neither to rule *Faith*, nor to guide *private Practice*. If it doth, the particular Church, which all confess fallible, is made the *Rule of Faith*, or the *Supreme Judge* of it; neither of which it can be. What mean therefore these *heats*? The Question is still about a *Judge* in the case, *Whether a mans particular conscience must not be the proximate rule of his actions?* If it must not, what must? We have lost the very Basis of the *Protestant Religion*, and shall whether we will or no be forced to *Rome* to find an *Infallible Judge*; and when we have done

that, we have but cheated our own ſouls; for he is not to be found there: though one may indeed be found that arrogates that Title, and to whom credulous Proſelytes give it. How much better is it to ſtay at home, and act according to that excellent *Canon* of Saint *Paul*, *Phil.* 3. 15. *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing you be otherwiſe minded, God ſhall reveal this unto you.* The confeſſed Golden Rule, *Whatſoever you would that others ſhould do unto you, the ſame do you unto them again*; if it were well ſtudied by Chriſtians, would put an end to all their little bickerings upon this ſcore; to all their prejudices one againſt another; all their uncharitable Judgings and Cenſurings of one another; all their eagerneſs againſt and perſecutions one of another. One thinks the Government of the Church ſhould be by *Prelates*, another by *Presbyters*, a third by *Common Suffrage*. Suppoſe all theſe agreed in this, that *without faith and holineſs no man ſhall ſee God.* Let every one walk in this way, they will at laſt meet in the *Kingdom of God.* One thinks *Children* ſhould *be baptized*, another thinks, *that none ought to be baptized, till he be capable of inſtruction, and making an open profeſſion of faith and holineſs.* Yet may both theſe truly receive, embrace, and reſt upon Jeſus Chriſt, as their alone Saviour; their failing is but in a *ſingle point of obedience* (there indeed one of them muſt fail, if they practice according to their principle) but who liveth and ſinneth not againſt God? Who judgeth every ſin in event damnable? eſpecially where the error too is in matter of judgment, which a man hath no power to over-rule his own Faith and Perſwaſion in; and to practice contrary to what he is perſwaded to be his Duty, were but to play the Hypocrite, to ſin againſt the light of his Conſcience, and interpretatively againſt the Mind of God, and that wilfully.

Miſtake not, the Kingdom of Heaven is not intailed to Parties, but as in every Nation, ſo amongſt all Parties, who ſo believeth in Chriſt, feareth God, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted of God. Take heed of embracing Propoſitions which are inconſiſtent with that *Faith* and *Holineſs*, without which none can be ſaved. There is alſo another *uncomfortable* ſort of Propoſitions; *viz.* Such as who ſo

holdeth

holdeth and *practiseth up to them*, will be obliged to break *Communion with all or most Churches*. And here I must lament the unhappiness of them that are fallen into the mistake of the Seventh-day-Sabbath, I have known some of them, whom I could not but think persons truly fearing God; but certainly next to *Errors in Fundamentals*, which will divide a soul from the Head *Christ Jesus*, such as divide *from the Body*, are of most dangerous consequence. For the *Christian Sabbath*, I make a doubt whether there be any thing (which is not plain in Scripture) which comes to us by *an universal tradition* of the Church; but that alone, no considerable number of people in any Age of the World ever disputed it; whence as also from the *Scriptural proof* (though raised by consequence for it) there is not this day a very considerable number of Christians in the World, but do observe it, as the *Lords Sabbath*, the seventh part of our time, which the Fourth Commandement hath consecrated: so as those under a different perswasion in this thing, are under a necessity of breaking Communion in *solemn* acts of *Worship* with all Churches; and this is very sad and uncomfortable. Study to be rooted and grounded in every Truth, though every Proposition of Truth be not of that value, as to break Unity and Peace for, yet there is not any but is worth searching and inquiring after: but if after all you cannot be reconciled to your Brethrens Opinions, nor yet reconcile them to yours; learn, according to the Apostles Precept, ἀληθεύειν ἐν ἀγάπῃ, to speak, to contend for, to hold the Truth in love, and to be charitable to those whom you may discern of different perswasions and apprehensions from you. God (as I have shewed you) doth in great wisdom permit these different apprehensions in his people. God may have *received those* that so differ, do you receive them because God hath received them. Thus I have shewed you, how my fore-going Discourse may be useful to you for the *improvement of your charity*.

It may also be useful to you for the *improvement of your piety*, and that divers wayes: 1. To *teach you to adore the divine wisdom in these different dispensations of his providence*. You cannot understand why God suffereth some of his people to be *weak*, weak *in faith*, weak as to their *spiritual habits and exer-* 2. *Use.*

exercises, you think God might have more glory if they were ſtronger, and their habits were more confirmed; which is certainly true, as to the actings of thoſe particular perſons; the more ſtrong any one is in faith, the more confirmed he is in the habits of holineſs; the more undoubtedly that ſingle perſon would glorifie God: but the *Government*, as of particular ſouls, ſo of *the whole Church, is upon Chriſts Shoulders.* And in the government of his providence he ſo adminiſtreth the affairs of particular ſouls, as he may have the moſt glory from the whole. Beſides, God ordinarily *governs his people*, not by miraculous operations, but by *ordinary reaſonable means.* Which two things being ſuppoſed, Gods infinite wiſdom appears, in the different ſizes and ſtatures of his people, in their different ſtates and complexions. Every one hath that meaſure of grace and knowledge, which beſt ſuiteth the good of the whole Body of his Church; which as the body natural hath different members, and thoſe of different uſes; and muſt be ſo diſpoſed, as ſhall render them moſt ſerviceable one to another, and the whole moſt ſerviceable to the great deſign of Gods glory. Let us not therefore trouble our ſelves, in diſputing the equity and reaſonableneſs of *Divine Providence*, in its motions; for though we cannot by ſearching, find out the Almighty unto Perfection: yet you ſee there is no ſuch variety in Gods Diſpenſations of this nature, but a reaſonable account may be given of it. And as to theſe Diſpenſations, it will appear at the laſt, that thoſe who have leaſt ſhares of this *hidden manna*, will have no lack of enough to bring them to Heaven; and thoſe who have the greateſt portions of it, will find they have nothing over.

2. But in the ſecond place, *This Diſcourſe affords a great argument to promote holineſs in all our ſouls.* The ſubject of my Diſcourſe hath been not the diſpenſations of *the firſt grace*, but Gods *further manifeſtations unto the ſouls of his people.* And you have heard it given, as one reaſon of Gods variety in the Diſpenſations of them; That *ſome ſouls walk more cloſely with God, are more afraid to offend him, and more careful to pleaſe him than others are.* For though the ſoul, as to the *Reception of the firſt grace*, be *meerly paſſive*; yet as to the receiving of theſe manifeſtations in the ſeveral degrees of them,

them, it is many ways *Active.* All therefore that I have to do, is to call upon you to *perfect Holiness*, and to shew you what *force* there is *in this Argument*, to ingage you to it. *Holiness* is a great General, comprehending whatsoever is the Duty of Man pursuant to the Will of God: All Duties both to *God* and *Man*, fall under the Motion of it, as well Acts of *Righteousness* towards Men, as Acts of *Devotion* towards God; yea, and not Acts onely, but even secret Thoughts, and those powers and habits of the Soul, which are the Principles of such Acts. When I therefore upon this account, call upon you to *perfect Holiness*, my meaning is, that you should study that perfection of *Spirituality* and *Heavenly Duty*, which God requires of you; but for the sake of those that are weaker, and because there are some pieces of *Holiness*, which do more properly and immediately tend towards the reception of these gradual manifestations, and the *omission* of which may in a more peculiar and special manner, hinder the reception of them, and provoke God to deny them; let me open this general in some few particulars.

1. First, *Take heed of all wilful sinning*, for if we consider, the with-drawings of these Divine Influences, as *punishments of sin*, as undoubtedly sometimes they are, it is hard to say what *wilful sinning* God may not thus punish. *Davids* sins of *Murther* and *Adultery* were acts of *unrighteousness* towards men, yet God punished them in this manner, as we may gather from his penitential *Psalms*; there is no sort of sin that I know but may for a time *separate* betwixt *God and the Soul*, and make him to *hide his Face from it*. That Christian therefore, that would have these manifestations of God unto him, these abidings of the Holy Spirit with him, must be Holy in all manner of Conversation, having a respect to all Gods Commandements, as well those of the second Table as those of the first. Conscience may check and reflect sourly upon the soul for any of them, and where that doth so reflect and check, there will be little *Peace* and *Comfort*, little *Life* and *Vigour* unto duty, little *Growth* and *Progress* in the *Ways* of *God*: Herein therefore exercise your selves, to keep a Conscience *void of offence*, both towards God and towards men; to keep your selves from all *filthiness*, both of *flesh and spirit*. 2. Se-

2. Secondly, In a more particular manner, take heed of all *earthy mindedness*; 1 *Joh.* 2. 15. *Love not the World nor the things of the World; if any man love the World the love of the Father is not in him:* v. 16. *For all that is in the World, the lust of the Eyes, the lust of the Flesh, and the pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World.* Pleasure, Profit, Honour, is all that the World can afford any man. A man given up to the pursuit of pleasure, or of worldly profits and advantages, or worldly honours and preferments, scarce can have any true love for God; and the promise of *manifestation*, is made to him that loves God and keeps his Commandments. The Apostle telleth us, *That to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* A carnal mind doth not onely bring a Soul to *eternal death*, in the last issue of it, but it puts a great death upon his *Life* and *Peace*, I mean his *Spiritual Life* and *Peace*. It is impossible that the Soul that is intangled in the businesses of the World, in a more than ordinary manner, should find his Soul either so free for, or so strong in the performances of spiritual duty, as that Soul who hath less of the cares and business or concerns of the world upon it. The Soul of a Man is not infinite in its powers, and cannot be with equal degrees of intention, employed upon two different, much less contrary things. While we are in the world, we must be conversing with the men of the world, and handling the things of the world; we must else (as the Apostle speaks in the case of converse with sinners) *Go out of the world:* but the less the Soul is ingaged in them, the less the Heart is set upon them, and its intention, and affections taken up with them; therefore it will be more free as to its spiritual business, and stronger in the performance of it. Let every one therefore learn that excellent lesson of the Apostle; 1 *Cor.* 7. 29, 30. *Let those that have Wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoyce as though they rejoyced not; and they that buy as they that possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it.*

3. Thirdly, *Be diligent in waiting upon God in the institutions of his publick worship, and consciencious in such attendance.* The *Preaching* of the Word of God is the great Ordinance of God

God for perfecting the Saints, both as to their *number*, by the work of Converſion, and as to *their graces*; by giving out further meaſures and manifeſtations of himſelf to his peoples Souls; he creaeth the *fruit of the Lips peace*. Chriſtians therefore, who wait for theſe influences, are concerned to wait upon the Lord in his own way. It was Gods ancient promiſe, *That whereſoever he recorded his name to dwell, there he would meet his people and bleſs them*: And conſidering that although the bleſſing of Grace doth not depend upon the Inſtrument; let *Paul plant*, and *Apollos Water*, God muſt give the increaſe; and he that planteth is nothing, nor he that watereth any thing; yet God dealing with reaſonable Souls, uſeth to deal with them in reaſonable wayes. I do not think it enough for Chriſtians to go to Church and hear Diſcourſes out of Pulpits, but to wait upon God under ſuch Preaching of his Word, as may appear and approve it ſelf to them, as having a *rational tendency, to the improvements of their Soul in Grace*. There are kinds of Preaching, under which a Chriſtian may ſit long enough before he find his Soul quickened or ſtrengthened, or improved by them. You may remember I gave you that as one reaſon, why ſome receive more gradual manifeſtations of *Divine Love* than others, becauſe they have *better means* than others have, or make a better uſe of means than others do. I take a conſciencious uſe of the more external means, to lie much in three things: 1. *In a good election of them.* 2. *In a ſincere and diligent attendance upon them.* 3. *In an after repetition of them to our ſelves, and a more private application of them to our own hearts.*

1. I ſay firſt in a good *election* of them. Though *Preaching of the Word* be the general means, yet the *Preacher* and way of *Preaching*, makes a vaſt difference in this means; and the concurrence of God to all the purpoſes of Grace is upon experience found to be evidently more; where the means appear in the eye of reaſon more proper. If the Preacher ordinarily preacheth not to the *underſtanding* and *capacity* of the hearer, or not *to the conſcience and hearts of hearers*, but fills up his time with other things, impertinent to the Souls Spiritual Duty; or wraps up his Duty in ſuch Parables and Myſteries of *Phraiſe* and *Abſtruſeneſs* of Notions,

that the hearer can make nothing of it; he can have little hope to profit by it, and he will shew little conscience in attendance upon them. Our Saviour, you know, gives this account, why he spake to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* and ordinary *Jews* in *Parables*; but to his Disciples opened those *Parables* and spake more plainly and intelligibly. *Mat.* 13. 13, 14. *Therefore speak I to them in Parables; because they in seeing see not, and in hearing hear not, neither do they understand; and in them is fulfilled the Prophecy of the Prophet* Isaias, *&c.* but v. 16. *Blessed are your Eyes, for they see; and your Ears, for they hear.*

2. Secondly, In a *sincere* and *diligent attendance upon them.* That Soul which will meet God in his Ordinances, must *in hearing hear*; he must go out with a design to meet God, and he must *hoc agere*, while he is waiting upon God. Our Saviour asks his Disciples, when they had been hearing *John* the *Baptist*, *What they went out for to to see?* It is a question we should all propound to our selves, when we go to wait upon God in his Ordinances: Now *what doth my Soul go out for to do*; what is its end in this motion? God ordinarily meeteth his People, according to the sincerity of their designs; which indeed maketh their attendances upon God, *seekings*, or *not seekings* of Gods Face.

3. It lies *in a practical application and whetting the Word hard upon our hearts and consciences.* This is the digesting of the Word; this now is a piece of Holiness of great import, to those that seek after the further manifestations of God, and higher measures of Grace; any growing, whether it be in *Faith* or *Love*. Nor is the Reading and Preaching of the Word onely to be attended, but the *Holy Sacraments* also; *Baptism* (which we have generally received in our Infancy) to be improved: And the *Sacrament of the Lords Supper* to be conscienciously attended. There is a great improvement to be made of *Baptism*, in order to our *Spiritual Strength* and *Vigour*: I have handled that in a particular Discourse in some of your hearing, and must not now enlarge upon it: it is our great error that we make no more use of our *Baptism* than we do. The Apostle *Rom.* 6. draweth great arguments from it to *strengthen* us unto Holiness. The *Sacrament of the Lords Supper*, is called (by the Apostle) *The Communion*

munion of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The meaning of that I do not understand, if it doth not signifie, That it is an *Ordinance*, wherein (if it be duly and conscienciously attended upon) Christ doth communicate the *vertue of his death.* Now I am sure all Christs manifestations to the Souls of his People, are a part of that purchase. It is true, it doth not necessarily work these effects, nor is God bound necessarily in this manner, to concurre with it; he is a *free agent* in all his effluxes of Divine Grace, but yet these are Holy Institutions, upon which he hath recorded his name, and we are bound in order to our receptions of his Grace, to lie at these Pools.

4. Be much, fourthly, in *Prayer*, especially in *secret Prayer*; there it is that the Soul can be freest with God, both in the *confession of its sins, and in the spreading of its particular case before the Lord*, and wrestlings with him. All that is to be obtained of God, either with reference to the *first Grace*, or the further manifestations of God unto the Soul, is in one place or other of Holy Scripture promised unto Prayer.

5. Lastly, Let not *Meditation* and *Holy Conference* be neglected. *Meditation* is the souls *Soliloquy with God*, a piece of piety often commanded and practised with great success. *Holy converse and conference*, is our conversation with Saints, who are to meet often together, to consider, and to provoke one another *to love and to good works.* Converted souls, *Luke* 22. 32. have an obligation upon them *to strengthen their brethren.* Men of knowledge do not only themselves *increase in strength* for their own use, but they *increase strength* in others; as Gods *instruments*, for the principal efficiency of *spiritual strength* is from the Lord. *Converse also with the people of God* is of great use to *increase spiritual life* and *vigor*, as one *coal* kindleth another; and oft-times God maketh use of his more *private servants*, to speak *a word in season* to the weary in short for all the *purposes of special grace.* I shall add no more, for the promise of *divine manifestations*, and the *abode of the spirit of God* with the soul, being limited to those *who love Christ*, and evidence *that love* by a *keeping of his commandements*; it must necessarily follow, *that the keeping the commandements of Christ in all things*, must be an adequate means; and indeed all that lieth *upon our hand to do*, in order to the obtaining of these *manifestations.* Now what greater argument to

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preſs holineſs can there be than this? *He that hath my commandements, and keepeth them* (ſaith our bleſſed Lord, *John* 14.21.) *he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, ſhall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and manifeſt my ſelf unto him.* And again, *v.*23. *If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* Who is there that underſtandeth not the difference betwixt a *ſtrong* and a *weak* Chriſtian, *weak* in the *reſiſtance of ſin and temptation*, weak in *the performance of all holy* and *ſpiritual duties*: betwixt a *Chriſtian* who feels himſelf in a free lively temper for the ſervice of God, ready to run the way of Gods Commandments, and a *dull, heavy, uncheerly temper* for duty; while in the mean time the conſcience is preſſed with a neceſſity of doing of it, betwixt a *ſad, dejected, diſquieted*, troubled ſpirit, and a ſoul full of that joy and peace that is conſequent to believing? betwixt a ſoul flouriſhing and daily ſhooting forth, in more perfect acts of grace, and a ſoul that ſeems to ſtand ſtill, and not to thrive in the wayes of holineſs? If therefore there be any advantage from further degrees of *ſpiritual ſtrength*, if any goodneſs in a *ſpiritual livelineſs, freedome, and alacrity*, if any *conſolation in Chriſt*, or *ſweetneſs* ariſing from thoſe *conſolations*, if any *comfort in the love*, the *ſpiritual love of God*? O ſtudy *Holineſs*, ſome gradual neglects of it are the greateſt cauſes of all that *weakneſs, dulneſs, ſadneſs, unthriftineſs*, under which your ſouls labour. God ſometimes acteth by *Prerogative*, ſhewing theſe mercies where he will, and becauſe he will, and with-holding them for the probation and tryal of his People; but generally it is in *juſtice* to puniſh his Peoples *omiſſions of their duty, or commiſſions of ſomething* which is contrary to their duty. And here now I ſhall put an end to my *Diſcourſes*, in which I have been exerciſed ſo long, relating to the Providence of God. I ſhall conclude with that of *Job*, Chap. 26. 14. *Lo theſe are parts of his wayes, but how little a portion is heard of him.* To which you may add that, *Job.* 11, 7. *Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? Canſt thou find out the Almighty unto Perfection?* v. 8. *It is as high as Heaven; What canſt thou do? Deeper than Hell, What canſt thou know?* v. 9. *The meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.*

SOLI DEO GLORIA.

FINIS.

An Alphabetical TABLE,

Containing the principal Matters contained in this Book.

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Wicked *men why suffered to devour such as are more righteous than they*, 596, 597, &c. *It is just with God and reasonable*, 597, 598, 599. *What use we are to make of it*, ibid. Et seq.

To the Reader.

WHat the Poet *saith of men*, None lives without some errors, He is best that hath fewest, *it's true concerning* Printed books. *Whoso considereth how much* intension *is required to the* writing, composure for the Press, *and* correcting *of so many* Words, *and* Letters, *as a* Book *of this* bulk *hath, will easily conclude it a matter of no easie atchievement, for any but tolerably to acquit themselves, and must be very uncharitable, if he will not give some allowances, for the want of* some letter *in a word, or the* transposing of a letter, *or the* mistake *of a* Point, *the* want *of a* little particle, *or* needless doubling *of it, being but common infirmities of a quick Pen, or Press. But there are some others of which I must give thee some account. The* Author *who intended no more than the* general Title *to run through the* leaves *of the* whole Book, *must not be charged, if the Title of any leaf be not so* properly set, *as he would have done (who best knows the matter:) that business was done by another hand, not knowing the Authors mind, and finding the top of the pages without titles.* 2. Two Presses *being imployed for expedition, the* Printer *not casting the sheets punctually that he turned off to another, thou wilt find a disorder in the figures of the pages from* 594 *to* 601. *The number of Sermons also miscounted, next* 45 *follows* 48 *Sermon: but that is supplied in the matter of the Sermons preceding* 45. 2 *of them making* 4, *but not distinguished by the* Printer. *The* Errataes *troubling the sense are very few, the greatest in* p. 108. l. 21. *These following the Author desires thee to be charitable to him, and the* Printer *for*

ERRATA.

PAge 56.l.9. r. *suspicious.* 58.l.7. r. *but yet.* 75.l.17. blot out [*he hath*] 66.l.20. r. *every tyde.* 68.l.7. r. *in it.* l.16. r. *not God.* 108.l.21. r. *Subdued so as the greater.* 120.l.6. r. *una.* 121.l.5. r. *and cannot.* 126.l.30. r. *restraining.* 192,l.5. r. *Scrabling.* 200.l.6. blot out [*think*] 211.l.23. r. *mens hearts.* 221.l.31. r. *of the land.* 222.l.20. blot out [*of*] 226.l.21. r. *Asa.* 243.l.5. r. παρατηρήσεως. 252.l. 21. r. *Adapting.* 328.l.25.26. r. *rapacious.* 340.l.18. r. *Jotham was.* l.29. r. *tracked. Grace is.* 241.l.13. r *Dives had a right.* 349.l.3. r. *despond.* 355.l.23. r. *as to find.* 373.l. 28. r. *be hindred.* 416. l. 30. r. *taking away.* 451. l. 32. r. *evil, thou maist not eat.* 488.l.23. r. *Stith.* 512.l.9. r. *Paris.* 530.l.24. r. *habits of Grace.* 530. l.29. r. *Gods Command.* 547.l.22. blot out [*repeated*] 563.l.14. r. *Sinnings.* 568.l.33. r. *feigned such.* 583.l.26. r. *it is.* l.31. blot out [*to good men*] l.37. r. *justifie God in.* 586.l.48. r. *infortunis.* 587.l.11. r. *Nierem.* 594.l.11. r. *is a temptation.* 597.l.25. r. *roil.* 604.l.25. r. *roiling.* l. 39. r. *have.* 605.l.18.r. *high: nature.* l.13. r. *heirs.* l.21. r. *add to this.* l.37. r. *roil his.* 606.l.7,6. r. *fourth terme.* 610. l.28. r. *Sense which is.* 602.l.32. r. *hence it is.* 606. l.23. r. *his Children.* 607.l.3. r. *extent of.* 620.l.4. r. *this temptation.* 619.l.3.r. *is that.* 621. l.1. r. *was Ishmael.* l.37. r. *particular nation.* 630.l,6. r. *of the Gospel.* 634.l.26. blot out *aphonimy of.* 636.l.36. r. *Severely.* 643. l.18. r. *not come.* 644.l.16. r. *play. So the man might.* l.21. r. *improveth.* 647.l.24. blot out [*about*] 656.l.6. r. *no need.* 661.l.3. r. *Swasion.* 673.l 9. r. *by thee.* 678.l.27. r. *wish any to.* 679.l.38. r. *make men.* 682.l.18. blot out [*for*] 683.l.1. r. *by God.* 690.l.9. r. *delighteth.* 693.l.8. r. *as sweet.* 696.l.19. r. *by himself.* 714.l.18. r. *presently apt,*

Lemma 35. page 452. God suffering man to fall,
our free will men. 457. & maintain a power in man to believe &c -

Page 608.
Paith: ye life of faith & a quiet life, as to passion;
al turbulent passions upon Gods providence are ye products o
unbelief. See ye whole paragraff.

Page 610: Learn to live upon God, before you have nothing
else but a God to encourage your self in.
So. indevour to convince thy self of ye sinfulness of
Disquietments. and call thy heart of them: Psalm
42. 11ver. why art thou cast down oh my Soul, — tru
Still in God::
a Christian wch hath learned ye life of faith. may be
troubled on every side, but he will not be distressed
2 cor: 8. 9::

Page 642. 643. See a Simile. between a father & tow so

Page 647: The disorder between us and ye bad pattern
of free will::

Page 650:: Q1: Wether God granteth to al men sufficient and
assistances or means of grace in order to their Salvation.
read ye Sermon

If ye Distributions of Divine grace were equal, how shou
God to any shew forth ye riches of his Grace. Pa: 65
& mark what followeth out of Augustine upon this argumen

P. 659. Let this caution you against listing yr selves in ye Number o
who cry up universall Grace, and a sufficiency of yme

Hannah Green

Doctrine of Election for Sermon 49.

Rom. 9. 15 verse

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